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Future Life

OUR LIFE IN PARADISE

*See contents
of the Future*

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TO
THE VICAR, CLERGY, AND COMMUNICANTS
OF S. JOHN THE DIVINE
FROM WHOM, DURING THE PAST SIXTEEN YEARS,
I HAVE LEARNT SO MANY MORE PRECIOUS LESSONS
THAN I CAN EVER HOPE TO ACKNOWLEDGE
OR REPAY

Introduction

AN attempt is made in the following pages to deal with questions which have to be faced, and to say certain things concerning them which much need saying at the present time.

In regard to prayers for the dead, a better acquaintance with the Church's teaching and practice has largely dispelled the prejudices which have been allowed to obscure the fact that they stand on precisely the same footing as prayers for the living. There is no objection to the one which may not with as much (or as little) force be urged against the other. This is well ; but how much yet remains to be done

to bring home to the hearts and minds of our countrymen not merely that they *may*, but that they *ought* to pray for the dead ; that if they fail to do so they are neglecting not merely a privilege, but a duty. How many hearts are disquieted, how often what would bring inexpressible comfort to the bereaved is missed, owing to the existing popular misbelief which the authorities of the Church of England have allowed to grow up on the subject, and to the prevailing delusion that it is the Prayer-book alone, and not the Prayer-book read in the light of, and interpreted by, the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church, which is our only guide in this and similar matters ?

It is not once but often in the presence of death that I have heard the question, "But are you sure that I shall see him or her, whom

I have lost; again? Shall I know him? Will she know me? Will the thread of our intercourse, so rudely snapped here, be reknit hereafter? Is it even now really broken? Does he still think of and care for me? Is there anything I can do for him? Can I live on in the hope that the fellowship of love, obscured for the moment, will be renewed with a completeness which will satisfy all my present longing? Or is death indeed the end, and is love itself, like all things else, doomed to die?'' Or it may be the question takes another form. "If my life was to be thus shattered, my light thus to be put out; if love was given me only that I might know the anguish of my present loss; if hope was encouraged only that it might be for ever quenched;—how can I trust, how can I love Him who has thus shattered all

my hope and cast my whole life down to the ground and buried it in the dust? Let Him do what He will, He has the power, but He has been deaf to my prayer, He has failed me in my hour of need. Let Him slay me too, but my heart is my own, and my heart He shall never have."

To questionings and murmurings such as these the Catholic Church makes the only sufficient answer. Death is but a passing episode in our life: not the end of our existence.

This present life is only a school where God begins to train and discipline the character for the eternal future which awaits it. This is the time given us for laying the foundations on which the great Master Builder shall erect some lasting and valuable superstructure

hereafter. It will make all the difference how far we are using our opportunities now, and, in the balance to be struck in the future, sorrow and trouble will be more valuable assets than happiness—as the world counts happiness—and prosperity. Our Creator and Redeemer not only chose the Cross for His own portion, but willed that His Mother should stand by His Cross and see Him die. The cup that He offers to His friends is His own cup of suffering, and to be accounted worthy to have a share in His expiation, the highest privilege that He reserves to His Saints. Suffering and death are transfigured in the light of such thoughts, and in the open Tomb and the joy of the Resurrection morning we have the pledge and assurance that those who seem to die live indeed to God, and to us.

But death brings other difficulties than those which result from broken hearts and shattered hopes. One is called to his account who, so far as we can see, has lived for this world alone. God and the things of God have been, so to speak, non-existent for him. He has so exclusively kept his eyes fixed on the things that are seen, which are temporal, that he has failed to perceive the things that are not seen, which are eternal. The things which pass not away—the Eternal Hills from which should have come his help, the City which hath foundations—have been no concern of his. He has cared only for earthly things. How shall we bear the death of such an one? What hope is there that can sustain us if there be no purification, no spiritual training, in the things of God beyond the grave; no purging

of a soul, which has only not irrevocably broken with God, and resisted all the solicitations of His grace, which may prepare it for the sight and enjoyment of those heavenly realities it has so grievously neglected in this life?

Are we to despair of the salvation of such souls? or shall we console ourselves with the mealy-mouthed mendacities of those popular hymns whose burden is "Peace, perfect peace," and "For ever with the Lord"? For mendacities they are when applied to any but the very few whose hearts have been given entirely to God. The conscience and understanding alike reject the conclusion that no difference is to be drawn between the very imperfect lives of most of us and lives which have been spent in the uninterrupted service of God.

The more we learn of God and ourselves,

the more we come to realize what sin is, the greater will be the consciousness of our own unworthiness. Truly, to see ourselves as we are, is to loathe ourselves in our own sight, and the consequence is, that, rightly refusing to condemn (since recognizing our own inability to judge) on the one hand, and yet conscious of the unreality of our language on the other, we cut the knot by practically making no distinction between the sinner and the saint; by treating sin as of no real consequence; by ignoring the necessity of holiness—convincing ourselves that somehow we shall all make our peace with God and be forgiven at the last—and by absolving the dead as easily as we absolve ourselves.

How absolutely contrary all this is to the Christian religion, how fatal to any real effort

after holiness, how destructive of all high appreciation of sanctity, it is needless to emphasize. Yet it is an attitude of mind only too common amongst us, and one for which our defective views of death, and of our relations to the dead, is largely responsible. It is only as we accept the truth of the Church's teaching and conform to her practice in regard to the dead that we shall have reason on the one hand to despair of no one's salvation, and on the other not to canonize those who, far from being fit for heaven, need all our prayers, and all the help we can give them, to enable them to bear the sight of the face of Jesus Christ, and the awakened consciousness of their own sin.

“Pity me, O my friends, for the Hand of God is heavy upon me! Pray for me; suffer for me; agonize for me! By your prayers, your

alms, your sacrifices ; by your self-devotion, your use of God's grace, and the supplications you shall make in my stead ;—so prevail with God, so, in union with the merits of Christ and His all-availing Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, satisfy for me, that I may at length, purged from my sins and their consequences, be made capable of entering into the Promised Land, and accounted worthy of the reward which Christ has purchased for me from the beginning of the world !”

Such is the cry of the departed souls to those who love them—a cry which carries with it the promise of consolation to the living ; for it assures them that all opportunities for the offices of love are not closed with death, but that they can still minister to the needs of those they loved and waited upon in life. It is a cry

we shall do well to hear, for it is a cry which as we give ear to it, and act upon it, will bring peace and rest to the dead, and comfort to ourselves.

Certainly amongst all the insincerities at present fashionable the memorial services for the dead, except in so far as they prepare the way for something better than themselves, are some of the most painful.

Instead of the solemn *Requiem* for the soul of the departed, with its cry for mercy, its appeal to the love which sought the woman who was a sinner, which welcomed the thief upon the Cross ; instead of the pleading of the one all-availing Sacrifice, and entreating that the Blood shed on Calvary for the poor sinner now gone to his account may not be wasted, but that even now God will have mercy on the work of

His own hands;—instead of all this, we have too often either a church decked with flowers as though for a wedding, with hymns such as I have described interpolated into the Burial Office; or else the mere Burial Office itself, which, unaccompanied by a Mass or *Requiem*, may not unfairly be regarded as an attempt to console and exhort the survivors, while ignoring all the needs of the departed on whose behalf the service is supposed to be celebrated.

To turn to the subject treated in the concluding pages of the volume to which these words are an introduction—the Invocation of Saints.

It is stated somewhere in the biography of the late Mr. W. E. Foster¹ that one of the things which struck him most on going abroad

¹ *Life of the Right Hon. W. E. Foster, M.P.*

was the domestic character which appeared to attach to the Churches. The Poor—all classes indeed, without distinction of age or rank—seemed to be completely at home in them!

The Church was not only the Sanctuary where God was to be met face to face; but it was also the House of Invisible Friends, with whom their relationship and intercourse was scarcely less familiar and intimate than that between them and the friends of this present life. The Saint before whose altar or shrine, or in whose chapel, they knelt, was not infinitely removed from them. He was one who, having been of “like passions with themselves,” might be confidently addressed and spoken to, a friend concerned in their welfare, in a position (because of his acceptance with, and nearness to God) to help them by his prayers, and

intervention on their behalf, more effectually than had ever been the case during his earthly life.

Were they being called upon to suffer? So, when on earth, were the blessed Saints now reigning in heaven. Did the purity and sanctity insisted on in the Gospel seem at times unattainable by mortal man? Were they discouraged and wearied, looking back, it may be, with longing eyes to the ease and freedom of the Egypt they had left? Those before whose altars they knelt, whose help they besought, were once men and women like themselves—men and women belonging to every rank and condition, whose lives had been lived under similar conditions to their own. If these had persevered, if these conquered in their day, if these now wore the crown, why should not they? It was

a woman, one of their race, whose will co-operating with God's election, had merited the glory of being the ever blessed Mother of God. It was a man like one of themselves, now most glorious amongst the Saints of God, the great Forerunner himself—the blessed John Baptist—whose correspondence with God's grace had kept him free from every taint of sin, even from his mother's womb. How could they, in the face of such examples, doubt that even the highest degrees of sanctity were open to them also? What room was there for discouragement amidst even the worst trials of life, when they meditated on such things? If others had despised the world, looking for "a better country, even an heavenly," why not they? If saints like S. Paul, inflamed with the love of Christ, could wish themselves accursed for their

brethren's sake, that they might win them to God, and could contemplate filling up in their own bodies "what was lacking of the sufferings of Christ, for His Body's sake, the Church," were they never to aspire to a similar glory of expiation? Was a complete and entire sacrifice of their whole selves, the fruit and witness of their love to God and their neighbour, which should have power with God, and win from Him His choicest blessings, never to be within the scope of their horizon? Nay, rather was it not true in the Church of Christ that the prayers and sufferings of each availed for all?—that none lived or died only to themselves?—that all were saved as members of a body? Was it not the fact that the good deeds of each availed for all?—the sacrifices of the one, or, it might be, his victories, supplying the defects, or

strengthening the hands of those who had need, in the same mystic Body? How could it be, if they were indeed lively members of a living body, but that each member of that body should feel with, should rejoice and suffer with the rest? Did death cut off from membership with the Body of Christ? Believing in this fellowship, assured of its reality, knowing that the *Communion of Saints* was a fact and not a phrase, of course they invoked the blessed Saints! Nor did it ever occur to them that such invocation, and the glorification of those who were themselves the living miracles of God's grace, was calculated to interfere with the exclusive devotion and worship which was due to their King. They might ask the Queen and the Denizens of the Court of Heaven to interest themselves in their favour, but they

knew too well from Whom all favour and grace proceeded to confuse the Author and Giver of grace with those who were the recipients of grace—men and women like themselves, whose intervention could only be an intervention of intercession, or the intervention of a delegated authority.

“*Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.*” It is because we in England have so largely forgotten these things, because by ignoring the worship due to the Saints we have ended by forgetting the Saints altogether, that we have, as a nation, grown so insensible to the invisible realities of the kingdom of God; and in the place of the full recognition of the mutual good offices which, in the Church of God, bind heaven and earth together, and of the duties which such a recognition involves,

have, in so many quarters, substituted the follies, and worse than follies, of occultism, of spirit-rapping, of necromancy, and the extravagances of so many of the sects, for that legitimate intercourse between heaven and earth, which can appeal for its sanction to the unbroken witness of the whole Church of Christ.

However little it may be susceptible of an exposition or explanation in words, those who are conscious of what that union is which exists between the Christian and Christ, of that indwelling of Christ in themselves which is vouchsafed in the most Holy Sacrament of the altar, are conscious also that their union with Him unites them in very deed and in truth with all other members of His Body. They know that those who are delivered from the trammels of the flesh, and the limitations

of their earthly existence, are nearer and closer to them, more intimately united to them, more capable of hearing them, more able to assist them, than ever they were before in the days of their earthly life; and they bless God for the knowledge of that which deprives death of half its sting, and keeps ever before their hearts and eyes the fact that they are here and now the inhabitants of no earthly city, but "fellow-citizens with the Saints and household servants of God," and united in the bonds of closest fellowship in every time and place with *all* God's children.

If these pages can induce any to think more seriously and deeply than they have perhaps hitherto done of these things, their author will indeed thank God.

May the writer of these few words of introduction venture so far as to ask that those who may have found them useful will remember him before the Altar of God, when the great Sacrifice is offered for the living and the dead, and that his name and needs may sometimes be mentioned to those Glorified Friends of God—the Saints—that at their prayers and intercession those good things may be granted him which his own unworthiness makes him unfit either to ask or receive.

HALIFAX.

September, 1902.

Preface

THE pages which follow will require but very few words to explain their *origin* or *purpose*.

In substance they were delivered as addresses in Lent of the present year. The many requests which at the time were made for their publication, suggested to the writer the idea that they might possibly prove helpful to a larger circle of Church-people, if they were revised, rewritten, and somewhat amplified, before being printed. It is hoped that this process has neither destroyed their character, nor rendered them less acceptable to those who asked to have them in a permanent form.

The concluding chapter was addressed to a Meeting of Clergy during the autumn of last year, and has been incorporated in this volume as having a direct bearing on the same subject.

As to their *purpose*;—though the proclamation of any part of the Church's faith or practice can never be safely regarded as inopportune, yet there would seem to be special occasions when certain truths of our Catholic heritage, which generations of prejudice may have tended to obscure, are more likely to receive a patient and impartial hearing. The problems, indeed, which are here discussed must press sooner or later for a solution at the hands of most thoughtful people *individually*; but during the last three years, the nation *as a whole* (stirred to its depths by events in South Africa) has been brought face to face with such questions

in all their stern reality. The many British graves which stud the surface of the veldt represent only too often homes bereaved, aching hearts, widowed wives, and orphaned children ; while many who have neither friends nor relations themselves to mourn, have been led to inquire if they too have no share in the duty and privilege of praying for those whose blood has been spilt in the defence of their country's honour. Prayer for the departed (which is only the expression of a natural and legitimate instinct) refuses to be stifled on occasions like these ; but when people have realized that they *may* pray for the dead, they naturally seek for any further information which the Church may have to give them about the life of those for whom they are interceding who have passed within the veil. These pages have

been printed, therefore, with the hope that what they contain may not only prove useful to others beyond those for whom they were originally intended, but also that they may help to bring home to the lives and consciences of many what the Catholic faith has to teach on these mysterious subjects.

EDWARD A. DOWN.

September 25th, 1902.

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*Prayer for
Dead*

“ We have the germ of endless life ; and death, like birth, is the starting-point of a new and rapid development, an indispensable transformation like those living organisms which are so marvellously metamorphosed before our eyes. We carry each one within us a hidden treasure of powers, which surge and eddy here, but will find their vent elsewhere. It is this hidden treasure which death reveals.” — *Life of Henri Perreye*, pp. 189, 190.

“ Nihil est enim aliud sanctorum communio, quod nemo ignorat, nisi mutua auxilii, expiationis, precum, beneficiorum communicatio inter fideles vel cælesti patria potitos, vel igni piaculari addictos, vel adhuc in terris peregrinantes, in unam coalescentes civitatem, cujus caput Christus, cujus forma caritas.” — *Epistola Encyclica Leonis XIII.*, 1902.

Immortality

MAN, at all stages of his history, has shown unmistakable traces of a desire to know if some further destiny may not await him hereafter, and to find some solution of those many dark problems which cluster so thickly round the grave. It matters not in what direction we look or to what period we refer, for wherever we try to penetrate the thoughts and feelings of mankind we are led to the same conclusion. Whether we study the records of remotest antiquity or the customs of uncivilized races at the present time, whether we examine the belief of those who lived under the Old Covenant or the creeds of those who have received no *special* revelation from on high, we find almost everywhere some

kind of instinctive conviction (often quite dim, vague, rudimentary, uncertain, or buried away beneath some mass of heathen superstition) that our short span of earthly life is to be followed by some further kind of experience when we have crossed the dark river of death. A belief in our own personal immortality, in fact, would appear to be almost universal; and until a person has made up his mind, much more positively than most men are willing to avow, that death really brings our conscious existence to a close, it is almost inevitable that he should strive to gain some intelligible idea about that other life, and some reliable information as to what shall befall him when he dies. The longing, therefore, to draw aside the curtain which hides from us the unseen world, is a sensation which in some measure is shared by us all; and however much we may seek to banish such thoughts from our minds in days of health and prosperity, or when friends abound, yet there are times in most lives when this subject of

deep and absorbing interest is brought home to us with a force and persistency which declines to be described as speculative or to be summarily dismissed. That in the course of such an inquiry we shall be confronted with many questions to which we cannot pretend to give a complete answer, is obvious; that we are entering on a subject where, since so little has been told us, our highest wisdom will often consist in a confession of our own ignorance, hardly admits of dispute; that it introduces us into the presence of mysteries which baffle the intellect and which our finite faculties are incompetent at present to comprehend, no one would care to deny; that it embraces much which has been intentionally concealed from our knowledge, and which (perhaps) it would not be good for us to know, is the conclusion which the reticence of Scripture would appear to suggest; and yet, on the other hand, there is a great deal which *has* been revealed, which God would have us to understand, and which opens

up to the devout contemplation of those who are ready to take the guidance of the Church as the key which is to unlock the deeper meanings of Holy Scripture and of human life.

*The Problems suggested by the Thought
of Death.*

It would not be very difficult, therefore, to find some very excellent reasons for trying to put into an intelligible shape our conceptions of the life hereafter, especially when we remember how history warns us of the peril, lest, when people have failed to gain true impressions on subjects like these, they manage to create those which are false, misleading, and dangerous for themselves. Each year as it passes helps to reduce the number of the friends we have known, of the people who have been kind to us, and the old companions of our childhood, as they join the long procession which passes beyond our sight, and are now

somewhere in the world beyond the grave ; while none of us can determine the exact time or the circumstances under which we must take the same momentous journey ourselves, and join them within the veil.

“ 'Tis sweet, as year by year we lose
Friends out of sight, in faith to muse
How grows in Paradise our store.”¹

There are none amongst us who cannot point to our own blessed dead whose memory we cherish and revere, in whom we are specially interested, and who find probably a constant place in our prayers. There are our own relations, to start with—the father or mother to whom we owed our existence here at all, whose names remind us of all the tender care which nursed our infancy, our first lessons of faith and duty, our early training, and all those sacred recollections which gather round the thought of home. We may have brothers and sisters in Paradise as well, who died long ago (perhaps),

¹ *Christian Year* : “ The Burial of the Dead.”

or who have only recently been parted from our sight—a husband, wife, or child, taken from us (as we thought) all too soon—the more distant members of our own family, and all that larger circle of connections “whom we have loved long since, and lost awhile.” And then our thoughts travel on to that wider circle which embraces those who at one time or another were brought into contact with our life—the friends we made at school, the teachers who influenced and moulded our character, those to whom (under God) we owed our conversion, the precious examples we valued, the lives which supplied us with an incentive or an inspiration, together with all those more distant acquaintances on whose memory we look back with kindly feelings, or whose real worth and goodness at the time we hardly understood.

That is the first thought which Paradise recalls to each one of us personally; though it suggests some wider and more solemn reflections than this. It reminds us of those who have

shared our joys and sorrows ; those whom we have loved too little, or too much ; those whom we have led into sin, or helped along the path of holiness ; those whom we have injured by our example, or aided by our advice ; those who were fortified by the last rites of the Church at their death, and those who went away (as men say) "without making any sign ;" or those whose death-beds left us in no doubt of their salvation, and those about whom we have our hopes, but they are distressingly uncertain. It is very wonderful to think how all these, together with that vast and innumerable throng which in their turn have walked this earth of ours and finished their trial, are now wonderfully *alive* ; that they are in God's most merciful keeping, and still (it may be) under His just and gentle discipline.

And when we think of all this, there are certain questions which rise up instinctively to our lips and press for an answer. "What," we ask, as we stand over the lifeless body of those

we loved—"what is the mystery those cold sealed lips are so powerless to disclose? Where is he now? If he exists at all, is it a *conscious* existence, where memory and affection are retained? Is the soul capable of any further activity when it has quitted this frail tenement of clay? Can it grow and develop through chastisement? Is it in pain, or at rest? Can we do anything to further its welfare? and does it still continue to remember and care for those it has left behind? Shall we ever see and recognize it again when our own probation is over? and shall we be reunited to those dear familiar faces when our turn arrives to cross the frontier of death for those unknown regions beyond the grave?" These are the sort of questions which at times of bereavement clamour for an answer; while there are seasons in our own lives as well when we are forcibly reminded that a similar experience must some day be shared by ourselves. The question, therefore, as to what will befall the soul when it has been parted from the body

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by death, is one that can never fail to be intensely interesting to thoughtful people, and so long as the world lasts, man will wish to know what he can about that mysterious state of existence whose nature Almighty God (for good reasons, no doubt) has refused in its completeness to reveal.

*Special Importance of such an Inquiry
at the Present Time.*

The reasons, however, which have just been specified are *general*, and hold good at all times as the justification for such an inquiry; but there would seem to be others also which are *particular*, and which make it specially desirable at the present day.

1. For the last three centuries we have been suffering from a reaction against Mediævalism. There were times, no doubt, when the dead engrossed a great deal too much attention; when the larger part of the popular religion

centred round their relation to the departed, and the good offices they could perform in their behalf; and when the use which was made of the Holy Eucharist in connexion with the souls in purgatory almost overshadowed all other aspects of it. At the Reformation, however, so much zeal was manifested in sweeping away undoubted abuses in these matters, that the primitive doctrine about the dead suffered most lamentably in this universal overthrow. All mention of the departed soul, and all prayers for the dead were carefully eliminated from the public offices of the Church; and though we can point to no actual condemnation of much that was at that time abandoned, yet it certainly has resulted in obliterating all traces of the true Catholic doctrine from the popular imagination. And what has been the result? The interest which in earlier days always centred round the *soul* has now been transferred (apparently) to the *body*; while our materialistic age, which is so impatient of anything supernatural, spiritual,

or mysterious, makes up for its omission by costly funerals, pagan symbolism (with its splintered columns, broken harps, inverted torches, skulls and crossbones, weeping angels, and the like), and all those hideous trappings of sorrow which seem to suggest that we have in these days come to sorrow "even as others which have no hope."¹

"Plant thou no dusky cypress tree,
Nor wreathe thy cap with doleful crape."²

Death has its serious aspect, it is true, since it is the punishment of sin—an aspect which men seek to disguise apparently beneath a profusion of flowers ; but how different is all this from the spirit in which the early Christians laid their departed friends to rest ! In the catacombs we find, again and again, the peacock and the phoenix as emblems of the resurrection, the palm-branch and the crown as the symbols of victory, the Good Shepherd gathering together

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 13.

² Tennyson, "Kate."

His flock with loving care, the anchor and the dove which betokened thoughts of hope and peace, or the olive and the grape with their associations of festal joy. "Everything is cheerful and joyous. . . . Of the mournful emblems which belong to nearly all the later ages of Christianity, almost all are wanting in almost all the catacombs."¹ Cannot a great many of those erroneous ideas about heaven and hell, that unnatural reticence in speaking about the dead, all those hideous disfigurements which are considered the appropriate adjuncts of a funeral, to a large extent, at least, be traced back to the modern notion that the dead *body* ought to absorb all that attention which formerly was paid to the immortal *soul*?

2. Nor does the mischief end here, since our own generation has witnessed a misguided reaction in exactly the opposite direction. There *were* times when the solemn pleading of Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice was looked upon as the

¹ Stanley's *Christian Institutions*, p. 314.

very essence and the central feature of a funeral; whereas our own generation has witnessed the rise and increasing popularity of its modern substitute in the shape of so-called "memorial services." We cannot fail, indeed, to detect beneath this modern craze some real change in the popular opinion on a subject where prejudice appeared to be deep-seated and radical, for which we may feel thankful. However much their accompaniments, in the shape of emotion, excitement, and subjectivity, may shock our sense of propriety, it is not difficult to trace the expression of a natural yearning in the human heart to commemorate the name of our friends in the presence of God, which marks a movement in the right direction; yet on the other hand there are elements about them which run utterly counter to the traditional usage of Catholic Christendom, which are correspondingly distressing. To eliminate all mention of sin, to banish all traces of penitence, sorrow, supplication, to substitute hymns of

triumph as if we were celebrating some martyr's victory for the ancient Sequence of the Church, to assume that no cry for mercy is needed, to presuppose that the soul as soon as it leaves the body (whatever sins it may have contracted here) is conducted in exultation past the very judgment-seat of Christ to the immediate enjoyment of the Beatific Vision,—combine to involve some violent assumptions which we might find it very difficult, theologically, to justify. We can imagine how "the poor sinner"¹ (if he knows anything about what people are doing) "would fain ask his friends to put up some prayer to the All-merciful God for the forgiveness of his sins, as he finds, to his shame and confusion, that he is being treated as if he were already numbered among the saints, and had

¹ Cf. Lord Halifax, *Proposals for Mutual Explanation*, pp. 13, 14. *Tertullian: Libr. of Fathers*, Note C, p. 120. S. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans (Libr. of Fathers)*, p. 504, Note D. "The martyrs were thought to be admitted to the Beatific Vision at once. See Tertullian, *De Anima*, 55; but this is a subject on which the Fathers speak with caution."

already won those honours which the Church has confined in the moment of death to those who have passed through the gate of martyrdom to the martyr's crown." Though the power of Satan has been broken by the victory of Easter morning, death has not ceased to be the penalty for sin. It is still the passage which conducts us to a tribunal that must inspire every serious Christian with feelings of awe which cannot be banished entirely by his complete trust in the Redeemer's mercy. It is the threshold across which we travel, not to immediate glory, but to a state of purification, where the sinner can still be aided by the prayers of the faithful on earth. We can hardly contemplate, then, phenomena which ignore such facts as these without feeling that the minds of average Church-people require a good deal more education on the nature of death, or that a memorial service, after all, is but a very questionable substitute for a "requiem."

3. But before passing on, it might be well to

add just one reason more. We have witnessed of late years the revival of what can only be described as a great deal of *illicit* intercourse with the dead, which may largely be traced back to the fact that our *legitimate* relation with them has been so widely repudiated, or at any rate ignored. It is the fashion to describe the present generation as an age of scepticism ; and yet, if history teaches us anything, it certainly suggests that the prevalence of such a temper is by no means incompatible with the growth of superstition and credulity. Rome, in the early days of the Empire, had avowedly lost faith in the old pagan deities, and in the higher circles (at any rate) men ostentatiously professed to believe in nothing particular ; and yet this did not prove any barrier to the influx of every conceivable Oriental cult, or to the popularity of every form of astrology and imposture. And so likewise at the present time there are numbers of educated people who glory in the fact that they have divested themselves of all the

dogmatic restraints of a traditional creed, who still feel the need of some substitute for religious faith, which generally takes the form of dabbling in the most recent spiritualistic craze. Some of these superstitions (we are told) "have been imported from the United States. . . . Others have claimed to derive their origin from the ancient religions of India. Some, like Christian science, profess to be consistent with Christianity, to be, indeed, a discovery of its real teaching, or a reaction from the corruptions which are supposed to have impaired and obscured it. Others, like Esoteric Buddhism, are professedly non-Christian or anti-Christian. . . . But it is notorious that in lecture-halls and drawing-rooms in London and elsewhere, men and women—many of them people of average or more than average intelligence in the ordinary affairs of life—have assembled, and still assemble, to listen to Swamis from India, or Mahatmas from Thibet, or to swallow the trivial futilities which spiritualistic mediums put

before them as the outcome of their intercourse with the world behind the veil. Palmists, crystal-gazers, clairvoyants, and psychognomists pursue their trade with little interruption from the law, and, it is believed, with considerable profit to themselves. There is a market for every superstition, however extravagant; an opening for every impostor, however vulgar. We do not know whether Satanism, which has its devotees in Paris, has yet found its way to London, but there can be few forms of Occultism which are not in some way represented among us.”¹ It is immaterial whether there is any residuum of truth in a craze which includes so much conscious trickery and intentional deception; it is unnecessary to determine whether the spirits in question (if they exist) are spirits of evil, and whether consequently we are now confronted with some system of demonology or the recrudescence of a necromantic cult.

¹ *Guardian*. Cf. Canon Newbolt's *Gospel of Experience*, p. 105.

which is parading itself under a modern guise and with a less offensive title ; but that it exercises a strange fascination over many minds is obvious—a fascination which renders them unwilling to desist from seeking a supposed intercourse with these “extraneous intelligences” of the spirit-world. “And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards, that chirp and that mutter : should not a people seek unto their God? on the behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony ! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them.”¹ Anyhow, with such facts before us, it may be time for the Church to ask herself seriously if she has faithfully put before her children the truth of which all this constitutes the caricature and the perversion, and whether Christian Eschatology does not furnish us with the true gratification of an instinct that seems to be so

¹ Is. viii. 19, 20 (R.V.).

deeply planted in human nature, and for which she professes to provide the only adequate and legitimate exercise.

A Sense of Immortality gradually apprehended under the Old Covenant.

There is still one question more to be considered before we pass on to the subject immediately before us—a question which helps to illustrate the ways of God in dealing with His fallen creatures, viz. the measure of knowledge about a future life and the intermediate state which was possessed by those who lived under the Older Dispensation.

Now here, as in most other things, the Divine revelation appears to have been *gradual*. God's method has always been to unfold truth to His creatures in fragments, and as they were able to bear it—"by divers portions and in divers manners"¹—according to the slow laws of

¹ Heb. i. 1 (R.V.).

progressive development ; nor does the sense of immortality form any exception to this universal rule. In the Patriarchal age there is surprisingly little about a future life, though it seems hardly probable that those who loved and trusted God in this world should have looked forward to nothing whatever beyond the grave. We notice, indeed, what care was taken about the burial of their bodies, and we repeatedly come across that suggestive phrase, "were gathered to their fathers ;"¹ but no other more definite reference is made to what becomes of the soul till a much later date. The translation of Enoch² may have suggested that death was not the close of all things ; but on the whole, the thoughts of God's ancient people were concentrated rather on temporal punishments and rewards than on that mysterious spirit-world, whose existence may very possibly have been assumed. But when we come down to the age of David, the idea

¹ *E.g.* Gen. xxv. 8, 17 ; xxxv. 29 ; xlix. 29, 33.

² Gen. v. 24.

of a future life certainly had gained a definite prominence which cannot be traced with anything like the same clearness before. According to the ordinary belief of the day, the spirit passed at death into Sheol, the under-world, to what Job calls "the house appointed for all living,"¹ where it entered on some "shadowy, half-conscious, joyless existence, not worthy of the name of life, where communion with God was at an end, and where God's mercies could be neither apprehended nor acknowledged"²—"the land of darkness and of the shadow of death; a land of thick darkness, as darkness itself."³ That is the kind of thought which underlies so many passages in the Psalms:—

¹ Job xxx. 23 (R.V.).

² Driver's *Daniel*, Introd., p. xc. Cf. also Delitzsch, *Bibl. Psych.*, p. 478: "A state cut off from God's grace, and from communion with Him—as a half-life in the darkness of the abyss, not without consciousness and remembrance and fellowship, but all only in feeble passing remnants . . . without any view of a return to the upper world, without any prospect of redemption."

³ Job x. 21, 22 (R.V.).

“For in death no man remembereth Thee ; and who will give Thee thanks in the pit ? . . . What profit is there in my blood : when I go down to the pit ? . . . Dost Thou show wonders among the dead : or shall the dead rise up again and praise Thee ? Shall Thy loving kindness be showed in the grave : or Thy faithfulness in destruction ? Shall Thy wondrous works be known in the dark, and Thy righteousness in the land where all things are forgotten ? ”¹

But side by side with these gloomy forebodings we come across other passages which indicate that the saints of the Old Covenant were not altogether without the glimpses of some wider hope. It was hardly possible, indeed, for men who were inspired with such strong trust in God’s loving mercy to do other than believe that He would eventually “deliver their souls from the hand of hell ; ”² and they

¹ Ps. vi. 5 ; xxx. 9 ; lxxxviii. 10-12.

² Ps. xlix. 15 ; cf. Job xiv. 14 ; Prov. xiv. 32 ; Heb. xi. 16, 35 ; Ps. xvi. 11, 12.

could look forward to the time when they should wake up as from a troubled sleep to see "God's face in righteousness,"¹ and hereafter be accepted by Him, "in whose presence is the fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there is pleasure for evermore."² With Isaiah this hope becomes transfigured almost into a certainty: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they rise;"³ while his prophecy that God "hath swallowed up death for ever"⁴ has an unmistakable Christian ring about it; and when Hosea is commissioned to proclaim, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction,"⁵ we almost feel as if we had finally passed from the shadow-land of type and figure to the pure and bracing atmosphere of the Easter victory. When Daniel, once more,

¹ Ps. xvii. 16.

² Ps. xvi. 12.

³ Is. xxvi. 19.

⁴ Is. xxv. 8 (R.V.)

⁵ Hos. xiii. 14.

has asserted how "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt,"¹ we are confronted at last with language which cannot be mistaken, and from this time onward it becomes an undoubted article of Jewish faith. But it was only after their return from Babylon—and especially in the century which followed the age of the Maccabees—that pious Jews, meditating upon the intimations of a future life which they found in the Old Testament, arrived at fairly definite though not always perfectly consistent, conceptions about the details of a resurrection, a final judgment and an intermediate state. If in earlier days the mind of Israel had been mainly fixed on temporal promises, yet trouble, captivity, and disappointment had taught them to look beyond the horizon of the transitory for the fulfilment of God's infallible promises in a more glorious future beyond the grave. It is, therefore, to the

¹ Dan. xii. 2.

Rabbinical writings of this period that we must look for the names which had been assigned to the separate localities in the unseen world, with their different conditions of happiness or misery. Sheol had been for many generations the comprehensive term to describe the intermediate state *as a whole*, into which every one entered at the moment of death, where the wicked are punished and the righteous rewarded ;—a conception which forms the background of the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and which, therefore, in its main outlines, we may assume, received the sanction of our Lord. But henceforward we come across other titles which still further particularize the divisions of the underworld. There is *Gehenna*, the vale of Hinnom, which was the name of a deep, narrow valley in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, hemmed in by precipitous rocks—a foul spot which had been desecrated by human sacrifices in the days of the idolatrous kings, and where huge fires were kept constantly burning to consume the refuse

of the city ; and this was now borrowed (as a figurative term, no doubt) to describe that part of Hades, or that condition of punishment, into which the finally impenitent will pass after the judgment day. And there is that other side of Hades, called *Paradise*—a word of Eastern origin, apparently, meaning “an enclosure, or park surrounding a palace,” which was adopted by the Jews to signify both the garden of man’s innocence and the place which is inhabited by the spirits of the just until the Last Great Day. Other titles to describe the same region are “the Garden of Eden,” “Abraham’s bosom,” or “the souls under the altar,” all of which are intended to bring before the mind that land of joy and peace from which Adam was expelled by his act of guilty disobedience, and to which man looks forward again in the hope of a future restoration. “The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die : and their departure is taken for

misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction: but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality.”¹

But, of course, none of those who lived under the Old Dispensation could know that which is clearer than daylight to ourselves; for it is Jesus Christ, Who by His own death, His descent into Hades, and His rising to life again, has “brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.”² *They* passed their time of probation in a land of hope and shadows; but *we* amid those eternal realities which have made that future life a certainty. The fact of Christ’s resurrection constitutes the most solid foundation of a conviction that death is rather some passing episode in our life than the end of our existence—that unique, crowning, triumphant event in human history which has transformed hope into delight, anticipation into assurance, and conjecture into certainty.

¹ Wisd. iii. 1-4.

² 2 Tim. i. 10.

*Conviction of our Immortality,
the Secret of Moral Effort.*

Just one word, in conclusion, by way of practical application. "It is all our life is worth," said Pascal, "to know if the soul be mortal or immortal." And because we *do* know it, it makes every conceivable difference in the way we look at our short probation on earth. A conviction like this, as soon as ever it has been appropriated, realized, and understood, adds power and depth and seriousness to everything we do here, because it assures us that this present state is only a *school* where God begins to train and discipline a character which will pass from one stage of existence to another, until it is ready for the full vision of the uncreated beauty. This surely is calculated to supply another incentive and motive to everything we try to do in the shape of self-discipline, and in the development of our moral life. We are *immortal* souls! and as we look through those endless

vistas of what God (if only we co-operate) means to do for ourselves, we can catch glimpses of Divine plans and ideals which far outstrip and utterly transcend all the capacities of our finite imagination. This life (so short, so momentous, so mysterious) provides us with a school which is only the first stage in our training for eternity. All that lies beyond it we do not know ; but at any rate it is worth while to take some trouble with ourselves and to respond to the great purpose which prompted our creation, whatever passing inconvenience it may cause us, if the issues of what we begin to do here are to be so far-reaching, stupendous, and eternal. It is worth while laying the foundations on which God can build deep and firm and true, because we are not erecting a structure that is to last for some "three score years and ten,"¹ but for *eternity*. It is worth while digging at all those imperfections of character which are so persistent, and at all those stubborn roots of sin

¹ Ps. xc. 10.

which we find it so difficult to clear away, because "whether we wake or sleep"—whether separated, that is, from an earthly body, or reunited to that resurrection-body, we are to continue in a life of unbroken fellowship with God—"we are the Lord's."¹ "We ought to build our houses," said Ruskin, "as if they were going to last for ever." And that is certainly true of the spiritual fabric of the soul. It is worth while, therefore, to have some high ideal of what our life may become under the touch of grace ; for if in this world we can only make a beginning, yet there is all eternity for God to complete this mighty plan ; and so long as we co-operate with the purpose of our Maker, we may be "confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."²

¹ 1 Thess. v. 10.

² Phil. i. 6.

The Disembodied Soul

“GOD forgive me if I’m wrong,” wrote Charles Kingsley, “but I look forward to death with an intense and reverent curiosity;”¹ and these words seem to describe a feeling which will be shared by most thoughtful people when they think of the solemn hour when their soul, separated from the body by dying, shall have passed into that mysterious world which we are trying to penetrate and understand.

Difficulties which confront the Imagination.

Now, it is obviously very difficult for ourselves even to make any mental picture of an existence

¹ *Life of Charles Kingsley*, ii. 343.

where all the conditions must be so utterly different from everything we have experienced hitherto. Here in this world we have always found ourselves bound up almost inseparably in thought and affection with a number of persons and objects which exercise their subtle and unmistakable influence over our behaviour in a thousand different ways, and which in some cases appear to determine so entirely the bent and direction of our lives, that we can hardly even *conceive* of a state of being which involves the absence of almost everything with which in this life we have been so long familiar. For whatever else death may involve for ourselves, it certainly necessitates a separation (abrupt, violent, complete) from our old environment, and introduces us into a realm of existence with which nothing here can wholly correspond.

Nor is that all. Death does not only confront us with scenes and surroundings which are new and unimaginable, and bring us into conscious relation with beings of higher orders

than our own, whose shapes and forms and conditions of existence are at present strange to us and inconceivable ; but *we ourselves* also will have undergone a change in dying, so complete and awful that in this world we can hardly appreciate its full significance. It is this feeling of *strangeness* which is so beautifully expressed by those words in which Newman makes the soul of Gerontius describe the sensation which it feels when it has quitted the body—

“ Am I alive or dead ? I am not dead,
But in the body still ; for I possess
A sort of confidence which clings to me,
That each particular organ holds its place
As heretofore, combining with the rest
Into one symmetry, that wraps me round,
And makes me man ; and surely I could move,
Did I but will it, every part of me.” ¹

We remain the same people we were before, since death does not destroy the continuity of our existence ; we shall continue to think and to feel ; we shall be able to exercise the faculties

¹ Newman, *Verses on Various Occasions*, pp. 332, 333.

of memory and understanding ; but the point is that henceforward all this will be effected without the help of these material bodies, which hitherto have acted as the organs through which we were brought into contact with all that is outside ourselves. In this life the soul is constrained to act through the various *senses* of the body ; so that with our present perceptions it becomes almost impossible for us to realize what it will mean to see without eyes, hear without ears, think without brains, touch without nerves, and to experience a something (perhaps) which corresponds to our senses of taste and smell. Here, then, is a condition which from the nature of the case it is hardly possible for us at present even to imagine ; only we are sure that it must prove an unaccountably new sensation, when we find ourselves suddenly divested of those organs through which everything has been hitherto discerned, and stript of that body which has been our incessant companion throughout, and yet continuing to live the same

conscious life under conditions so entirely strange and inexplicable.

Our Undeveloped Faculties of Perception.

If this, indeed, were the only change which death involved, it would be sufficient to make our future condition, while we still live in the flesh, very hard to conceive, and to warn us against speculations where revelation has not supplied us with the data for satisfying human curiosity. But there are other limitations which confront us as well, and it behoves us to realize that our difficulty in this particular case does not merely consist in our incapacity to conceive what it will feel like to be a "disembodied soul," but also in the fact that possibly we have not at present the faculties necessary either to understand our condition in a spiritual state, or even to picture that invisible world as it really is. "Each stage of existence," says Sir Edwin Arnold, "can only be apprehended and

defined by the powers appertaining to it. Herein lurks the fallacy which has bred such contempt for transcendental speculations, because people try to talk of what abides beyond, in terms of their present experience. It is true they must do this or else remain silent; but the inherent disability of terrestrial speech and thought ought to be kept more constantly in view. . . . We ought to be reassured, therefore, rather than disconcerted, by the fact that nobody can pretend to understand and depict any future life, for it would prove sorely inadequate if it were at present intelligible. To know that we cannot now know is an immense promise of coming enlightenment. We only meditate safely when we realize that space, time, and the phenomena of sense are provisional forms of thought.”¹ It is almost a truism,—but before we can appreciate anything at all, we must acquire, or at least cultivate, those faculties which are necessary for the purpose. A man

¹ *Death and Afterwards*, pp. 23–25.

without musical ear is thereby disqualified from expressing his opinions on harmony. A person who is colour-blind is necessarily excluded from criticizing in matters of art. And so in things spiritual, special faculties must be developed before we have the capacity for apprehending what mortal "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,"¹ to perceive or describe. And this, perhaps, may account for the shape in which three experiences have been recorded for us in Scripture.

1. First, there was S. Paul's vision, which he relates in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians.² "I know a man in Christ," he writes, "fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not ; or whether out of the body, I know not ; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not ; God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

² 2 Cor. xii. 2-4 (R.V.).

words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The "man" here referred to is undoubtedly the apostle himself, who relates certain spiritual communications of a preternatural kind which had been vouchsafed to him in the past. The "fourteen years ago" probably refers back to the time when he was waiting at Tarsus for God to point out to him the sphere of his work ; while the *reason* for this special revelation may be traced to the fact that God was calling him to endure more sufferings, and to labour more abundantly than the rest of the apostles. Anyhow, while still alive on earth he was permitted to visit a world which other mortals enter only when they die, in order that his grasp of eternal truth might be the firmer. The apostle was not sure "whether this rapture was a translation of his body and soul together, or a translation of his disembodied spirit alone ;"¹—but of one thing he was quite certain, viz. that though he was able

¹ Bishop Wordsworth's Comment. *in loc.*

to see, hear, think, understand, and remember his vision, yet he found himself unable to describe it afterwards. The wonderful sights and sounds of that other world lived on in his memory ; but as soon as his spirit had recrossed the threshold, he was powerless to recall in detail what he had witnessed in Paradise. There only remained "a dim, vague recollection of transcendent beauty, as when men dream in the night, but can give no intelligible account of the vanished scene when they awake from their sleep ;"¹ so that the apostle found it impossible to put into human words those mysteries which belong to another state of existence. "God there manifests Himself," says Newman, "not as on earth dimly, and by material instruments, but by those more intimate approaches which spirit admits of, and our present faculties cannot comprehend."²

2. Then, secondly, we seem to arrive at a

¹ Luckock, *Intermediate State*, pp. 4, 5.

² Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, iii. 374.

very similar result from the experience of Lazarus. For four days (when our Lord came to raise him from the dead) Lazarus had been a disembodied soul. His soul, separated from the body, had gone to the place where other souls must go ; but the story of his experience in that other world has never been recorded, and probably because, when the soul had been reunited to the body, he felt that this was beyond the range of human description. We may be quite sure (unless people in those days were much less interested in such subjects than in ours) that he must have been questioned about what happened in that interval again and again, and pressed by eager friends to reveal the secret of the grave ; but "to all alike he turns the same unwavering look—the face that, awed by the visions of the past, was never seen to smile again—the silence never broken, the secret never revealed."¹

¹ Luckock, *Intermediate State*, p. 6. Cf. also Trench on Miracles, p. 452 (note): "The first question he asked

“When Lazarus left his charnel-cave
And home to Mary’s house return’d,
Was this demanded—if he yearn’d
To hear her weeping by his grave ?

“ ‘ Where wert thou, brother, those four days ? ’
There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

“ From every house the neighbours met,
The streets were filled with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crown’d
The purple brows of Olivet.

“ Behold a man raised up by Christ !
The rest remaineth unreveal’d ;
He told it not ; or something seal’d
The lips of that evangelist.”¹

3. And then, thirdly, S. John, while still in the flesh, was permitted to gaze through “a door opened in heaven” on a scene which he found it equally impossible to describe except by translating his experience into the language of earthly symbolism. The “throne set in

the Lord after he was come back from the grave, was whether he should have to die again, and learning that it must needs be so, that he never smiled any more.”

¹ Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, xxxi.

heaven," its divine occupant, who "was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius," the rainbow round about it "in sight like unto an emerald," the "four and twenty elders clad in white raiment and with their crowns of gold," "the lightnings and thunderings and voices," the "seven lamps of fire," "the sea of glass like unto crystal," "the four beasts full of eyes before and behind," the harpers with their harps, and all the scenery of the Apocalypse,¹—all this was the way in which the rapt apostle sought (by symbolic language, and in the only way by which the truths they embodied could be brought within the range of human comprehension) to express the unspeakable glory which his spirit realized. "His words," it has been truly observed, "as those of the prophets under the Law, are rather spontaneous accompaniments on what he saw, than definite and complete descriptions addressed to us. They were provided, indeed, and directed according

¹ Rev. iv. 1 ff.

to our need, by an overruling inspiration ; but the same sacred influence also limited their range, and determined under what aspect and circumstances they should delineate the awful realities of heaven. Thus they are but shadows cast, or, at best, lines or portions caught from what is unseen, and they attend upon it after the manner of the Seraphim, with wings covering their face, and wings covering their feet, in adoration and in mystery.”¹ The things in heaven, in fact, are too high to be expressed through the medium of human words.

And yet if it be true that there are countless things about that life beyond the veil we cannot comprehend ; if there are limitations assigned to the capacities of finite reason ; or if God has seen fit for His own wise purposes to maintain with reference to certain questions a fixed and impenetrable reserve, yet on the other hand it is a subject which in other places we are invited to investigate. “I would not have you to be

¹ Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, iii. 367, 368.

ignorant," says S. Paul, "concerning them which are asleep,"¹ while a special blessing is attached to a study of "the words of the prophecy" which gives us our clearest insight into that other world.² If most of what we are told in that wonderful vision is veiled in imagery, it is well to remember that imagery in any language (and especially in Scripture) is meant to convey some definite truth to the mind, even if that truth is presented to the imagination in a figurative shape. If our mental pictures should turn out to be inaccurate, they are not necessarily misleading, when they have helped us to get hold of the idea which they are intended to illustrate and enshrine. Everything, in fact, combines to convince us that we are justified in trying to form some conception of the life of disembodied souls, and in seeking for some kind of notion of what will befall us in the unseen world.

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 13.

² Rev. i. 3.

Mutual Recognition beyond the Grave.

Where there is so much, then, that seems to put the nature of that life outside the reach of our understanding, we naturally like to dwell on those points which make the intermediate state intelligible to our comprehension. And there are two things, perhaps, which help in this direction that might occupy us for a few minutes in conclusion.

And, first, there seems to be a fairly general consensus of opinion (though the belief may not be altogether unattended by difficulty) that we shall be able to recognize in that other world those whom we have known and loved on earth. The question must have presented itself to most of us at times, as we ponder over the details of that life to which we all are hastening—"Shall I see and know again the persons who were so closely linked to me on earth, and made up so large a part of my life? Shall I meet the members of my own family beyond the grave?

Are personal friendships imperishable? Is 'love really strong as death ;'¹ or, can I look forward to renewed companionship (in any intelligible sense) with the blessed dead?" To assert that we shall be surrounded hereafter with none but strangers who had no particular relation to anything we knew or loved on earth, may or may not be the case ; but if it should be so, it is worth noticing how this would signify that one essential feature of our life as we have always known it here would have been obliterated by death—a statement which we have no warrant for making. The hopes of mankind, however, have always answered this question in the affirmative, and the belief has been almost universally cherished that we shall meet with our parted friends under some happier conditions hereafter.² It is not always safe, no doubt, to argue

¹ Cant. viii. 6.

² Cf. *King John*, act iii. sc. 4—

"And Father Cardinal, I have heard you say—
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven ;
If that be true, I shall see my boy again."

that a conviction which has been generally accepted by mankind is necessarily *true*;¹ yet when, as in this case, we find that such a belief has been widely prevalent among heathen nations, was allowed by the Jews in spite of their feeble hold on a future life, was in accordance with the general drift of the teaching of the Gospel, and has been accepted by the voice of Catholic tradition, we seem to possess an accumulation of evidence which it would not be easy to gainsay or overthrow. We might follow this line of thought, then, a little further in detail.

1. And first in *heathen literature*. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the writings of

¹ But see Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.*, I. viii. 3, where he asserts that "the general and perpetual voice of men is as the sentence of God Himself. For that which all men have at all times learned, Nature herself must needs have taught; and God being the Author of Nature, her voice is but His instrument. By her from Him we receive whatsoever in such sort we learn." Ἄ γὰρ πᾶσι δοκεῖ, ταῦτ' εἶναι φασκέν· ὁ δ' ἀναιρῶν ταύτην τὴν πίστιν οὐ πάνυ πιστότερα ἔρεϊ.—Arist., *Eth.*, x. 2.

Classical antiquity *abound* with testimonies in favour of such a conviction. When Ulysses¹ is represented by Homer as passing into the invisible world, he is able to recognize the shades of all the mighty dead, and to hold familiar intercourse with his old departed friends. He is delighted to greet the form of his mother in the nether world, and she in her turn receives her son with a passionate outburst of love and affection; while Achilles and Patroclus—an earthly type of inseparable friendship—are found to occupy precisely the same mutual relation in the underworld. Virgil, likewise, has described Hades as peopled with souls who remain faithful to their earthly attachments; and when Æneas visits the dead, he receives a cordial welcome from his old comrades in the flesh. Plato, too, in recording the trial of Socrates, tells us how that ancient sage burst out into a rapture of delight at the thought of holding communion with the

¹ This and the following illustrations are derived from Luckock's *Intermediate State*, pp. 108 ff.

illustrious dead. "Will it not be unspeakably blessed," he asked, "when escaped from those who *call* themselves judges, to appear before those who deserve the title . . . or to converse with Orpheus, and Musæus, and Hesiod, and Homer ; how much would any of you give to purchase this ? Believe me, I would choose to die frequently, if this be true ; for it would be delightful to hold communion with the ancients who died under an unjust sentence pronounced upon them. What would one give to converse with him who led the great armament to Troy, or with Ulysses, or with a thousand others one could name, with whom to associate would be an inconceivable pleasure ? " And to take just one instance more. Cicero, in writing on "Old Age," finds its discomforts relieved by the anticipation of a speedy reunion with his departed friends. He, too, like Socrates, carries his thoughts beyond the men with whom he had been united by actual ties of flesh and blood, and rejoices in the prospect of looking upon the

great and noble whom in imagination he had learnt to love, and whom he expected to recognize hereafter by the marks which they had stamped upon their lives for eternity through the works they had left behind them in time.

2. And we reach a similar result from a study of *the Old Testament*. As the career of each great patriarch closes, the sacred narrative is careful to record how he "was gathered unto his people;"¹ as if that "gathering" was regarded as an event of no ordinary importance, which followed death but preceded burial. When Jacob recognized his son's bloodstained coat, and said, "An evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. . . . I will go down into the grave [*i.e.* Sheol, R.V. margin] unto my son mourning,"² the patriarch was evidently not referring to the tomb (since he believed Joseph to have been devoured by some evil beast), but he comforted himself with

¹ Gen. xxv. 8, 17; xxxv. 29; xlix. 29, 33.

² Gen. xxxvii. 33-35.

the thought that he would meet and know his son in those realms where this broken fellowship could be renewed. So likewise when the child of David's sin with Bathsheba had died, the king had fasted and prayed so long as it seemed possible that God might be gracious to the royal penitent; but when all was over, he "arose from the earth, and washed and anointed himself," and laid aside the emblems of his mourning, because (as he explained afterwards) "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me;"¹—and he found in that conviction a source of joy and consolation.

3. And *the New Testament* points us to the same conclusion. The recognition between Dives and Lazarus was mutual; while if a sinner in torment could recognize a soul transported to Abraham's bosom, how much more likely is it that the blessed dead should recognize each other hereafter!² The same inference has been drawn from those difficult words with which

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 20, 23.

² S. Luc. xvi. 23.

the parable of the unjust steward concludes: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."¹ The "mammon of unrighteousness" probably means "the wealth which is often procured unjustly" — "when ye fail" means "when ye die;" and our Lord would teach us that we are to make friends of the poor, who, by receiving our alms in this life, will stand (as it were) on the threshold of that other world, ready to welcome the souls of their benefactors on their arrival there.² When the question is asked *how* it will

¹ S. Luc. xvi. 9.

² A difficulty has sometimes been felt owing to the fact that our Lord has told us that all *physical* relationships will cease in that other world. But this need not imply that all ties of natural kinship will disappear. "I cannot doubt," wrote Bishop Wilberforce with reference to the death of his wife, "that there will be in the future world some glorified and exalted counterpart of every earthly relation, for nothing that is real dies in God's world, but to experience a better resurrection. . . . When the great mystery of Christian marriage has united two into one, in all the fulness of its Christian meaning, when there

be possible to recognize people in that other world, perhaps it is safest to answer that we do not know. If the soul after death is clothed with some subtle spirit-form,¹ the difficulty of recognition (intellectually considered) may possibly be modified ; but there are other ways in which identity may be disclosed. If we could know the manner in which our faculties are to be exercised in the disembodied state, we might be able to solve the mystery ; but this is precisely what in our present condition we do not understand.

The Soul's Investiture in the Intermediate State.

The other consideration which helps us to has been union in prayer and aspirations and worship and service, I do not doubt for one moment that there will be a golden counterpart of all this in that other world, and in whatever way it may be accomplished, and under whatever names designated, that there shall be there a special unity between those who have been below so one in Christ" (*Life*, vol. ii. p. 454) ; cf. also Luckock, *Intermediate State*, pp. 122-126.

¹ Cf. *infra*, pp. 54 ff.

realize our life in that other world a little more intelligibly, is due to the fact that Scripture in many places seems to represent the souls of the departed as clothed with *some kind of visible shape* (different from the material body, of course) between death and the general resurrection. "It seems to us," wrote Bishop Webb, "that Holy Scripture, so far from saying that the spirits and souls of the righteous have no bodily form when they depart hence, seems to imply the contrary. Not this earthly body, of course, yet some sort of bodily phenomenal investiture, seems to be implied throughout. The souls of the departed are spoken of as being not only recognized, but, in some sort of spiritual way, seen."¹ "We must therefore entertain," writes Martensen, "the idea of some sort of *clothing* of the soul in the realm of the dead; in that cloister-like (we speak after the manner of men), that monastic, or conventual world;" and a little further on he speaks of

¹ *Presence and Office of the Holy Spirit*, p. 123.

"some intermediate kind of corporeity."¹ "This is no novel or unauthorized fancy," says Dean Luckock, "for it has come down to us even from the primitive Church ; where it seems to have engaged the attention of several of the Fathers."² The only place in Scripture where we seem to get any apparent reference to this subject is where S. Paul writes, "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle [margin, 'bodily frame'] be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens ;"³ but as this has been interpreted by some authorities⁴ as

¹ Martensen's *Dogmatics*, pp. 460, 461 ; cf. also Delitzsch, *Biblical Psych.*, p. 508 : "The phenomenal body in which such an one manifests himself, is as the embodied blissful hope of his coming glorification ; and as a pledge of this, he receives a white raiment, in which the garment of salvation, wherewith even here below he was invested inwardly, makes itself visible ; and the faithfulness with which he watched over the purity of his robe of salvation finds its recompense."

² *Intermediate State*, p. 119.

³ 2 Cor. v. 1 (R.V.).

⁴ *E.g.*, Delitzsch, Wordsworth, Sadler, etc. ; cf. Mason, *Faith of the Gospel*, p. 360 (note).

meaning the *glorified* body which will be received at the resurrection, even this passage cannot be appealed to with certainty. Holy Scripture, however, wherever it speaks of the departed, seems to *point* in this direction. Dives in the parable is said to have "*seen* Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."¹ Samuel some years after his death is represented as appearing at Endor in some *visible* shape. "What seest thou?" Saul asks the witch; to which she replies, "I *see* a god [Elohim, 'a lofty being'] coming up out of the earth." And then when the further question is put, "What form is he of?" she answers, "An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe."² Samuel, therefore, is represented as coming up from Hades in some shape and clothing as he had in this world, just as many centuries later Moses and Elias were recognized by the disciples on the Mount of the Transfiguration as manifested in some external form which corresponded to their

¹ S. Luc. xvi. 23.

² 1 Sam. xxviii. 13, 14 (R.V.).

temporal history. This form, of course, was spiritual ;—Samuel apparently being visible only to the witch, while Moses and Elias were seen by the apostles when in a state of ecstasy. Then once again in the Apocalypse, which draws aside the veil which hides the other world, the souls in Paradise are still said to be *seen*. “I *saw* under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God.”¹ And they appeared in some *visible* form, which were sufficiently like human bodies to wear the white robes that were given them. Dante, indeed, has distinguished this first raiment of the intermediate state from the second raiment of the resurrection-body (an idea which was not unknown to S. Augustine and other patristic writers), but he strangely describes this “first robe” (*prima stola*) as a kind of *aerial* body “having organs of sense like a natural body, but capable of being merged into a glorified body at the resurrection.”

¹ Rev. vi. 9, 11.

“Soon as the place there circumscribeth it,
The virtue informative rays round about,
As, and as much as, in the living members.
And even as the air, when full of rain,
By alien rays that are therein reflected,
With divers colours shows itself adorned,
So there the neighbouring air doth shape itself
Into that form which doth impress upon it
Virtually the soul that has stood still.
And then in manner of the little flame,
Which followeth the fire where’er it shifts,
After the spirit followeth its new form.
Since afterwards it takes from this its semblance,
It is called shade ; and thence it organizes
Thereafter every sense, even to the sight.
Thence is it that we speak, and thence we laugh ;
Thence is it that we form the tears and sighs,
That on the mountain thou mayhap hast heard.”¹

*The Duty of Developing our Spiritual
Faculties in this Life.*

The one practical consideration that might be urged from this line of thought, in conclusion, is the prudence of using our life here as the opportunity for *developing those spiritual faculties* by which alone we can apprehend Divine things in this world, and which are likely to find an

¹ *Purgatorio*, xxv. 88-105 (Longfellow’s trans.).

ever-widening sphere for their wonderful operations in that mysterious world beyond.

“Any one study,” it has been truly said, “of whatever kind, exclusively pursued, deadens in the mind the interest, nay, the perception, of any other.” Our danger, then, in this world is lest we allow ourselves to become so engrossed with our material concerns—our occupations, studies, pleasures, comfort, personal aggrandizement—that our higher nature becomes gradually dwarfed, stunted, starved, till finally, through persistent neglect, it is completely destroyed. Such temporal pursuits, of course, are not necessarily wrong in themselves—nay, in most cases they represent the vocation to which God has called us, and they are intended to serve as His consecrated instruments for our moral training ;—and yet none of us can afford to ignore the risk of their fixing on our life that iron grip which crushes out the power of spiritual apprehension. Our nature (as we know from experience) is so constituted

that we can only assimilate the treasures of our environment by training those faculties by which they are capable of being appropriated. And this is a truth which applies to every department of our life. Keeness of observation, a sense of beauty, artistic taste, a musical ear, are (at least, in a rudimentary state) almost universal endowments; but it depends upon each one of us separately whether they shall be developed by exercise or starved by neglect. And yet how few people realize that our *spiritual discernment* is likewise a faculty subject to similar laws, and that it depends upon our individual response to the Divine suggestions whether this faculty shall be stifled and destroyed, or quickened and intensified by our exertions into vigorous, active, energetic life! "We have an organ or faculty," it has been said, "for the discernment of spiritual truth, which, in its proper sphere, is as much to be trusted as the organs of sensation in theirs."¹

¹ Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 6.

So far, then, from our spiritual sense being any illogical encroachment on our intellectual powers (as people sometimes think), we must recognize that there is an appropriate sphere for both. Left to themselves, our ordinary faculties are not competent to pass a final judgment on the deep mysteries of revelation, while it is equally foolish to refuse assent to the supernatural elements of religion because they lie outside the province of observation and experiment, or transcend the limited capacities of our created intelligence. "Why," asks Newman,¹ "should we be surprised that one faculty of our compound nature should not be able to do that which is the work of another? It is as little strange that the mind, which has only exercised itself on matters of literature or science, and never submitted itself to the influence of Divine perceptions, should be unequal to the contemplation of a moral revelation, as that it should not perform the office of the

¹ Newman, *Univ. Sermon*, p. 61.

senses." Perhaps we have never taken the trouble to get at S. Paul's real meaning when he told the Corinthians how "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. . . . But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."¹ What a terrible catastrophe it would prove to discover as we enter on that future life that we have become afflicted by some serious moral atrophy, or have been stricken down by an incurable spiritual paralysis brought on by our own apathy and neglect! In this fact, then, surely we can trace an additional motive (if we want one) for bestowing greater care on meditation, prayer, worship, realization of the presence of God, and other spiritual exercises which

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 14.

are the consecrated instruments for developing that side of our nature which it is perilous for any serious Christian to neglect. If there is a great deal about that other life which we cannot understand, yet there is one thing which we know for certain, viz. that it will afford us a largely extended sphere for the exercise of our spiritual activities. In this life such occupations involve a serious strain and effort, as long as our "corruptible body presseth down the soul;"¹—and yet this world is given to us as the scene where we must *begin* to cultivate those very capacities which in another life may admit of indefinite growth and expansion. There may be other ways in which we can prepare for that future which awaits us, but there is nothing which will help so effectually to fit us for our occupation *there*, as the diligent training of those special endowments which have been given us that we may find the true end of our creation in the service and worship of our Creator.

¹ Wisd. ix. 15.

The Activities of the Unseen World

HOLY Scripture confronts us in many places with the contrast between what will happen to the material and to the spiritual parts of our nature when we die. "When the breath of man goeth forth he shall turn again to his earth."¹ The body, sooner or later, in fulfilment of that primeval curse, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,"² must pay the penalty of our ancestral transgression; whereas the higher imperishable elements of our being, so far from being dissolved by death, will start forth on their journey to the "land of far

¹ Ps. cxlvi. 3.

² Gen. iii. 19.

distances" ¹ under conditions which must be so utterly unlike anything we can have experienced before. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God Who gave it." ² We want to know, then (so far as it has been revealed, and so far as our finite capacities can comprehend it), what sort of life is being lived by departed souls, and "after they have been delivered from the burden of the flesh," ³ what is the nature of their occupation in the intermediate state.

*Death does not involve a Suspension of
the Soul's Consciousness.*

And the first thing that we can say for certain about them is, that so far from being in a condition of dreamy forgetfulness or mute stagnation, they exist in a state of *complete consciousness*. Death, it is true, is often spoken

¹ Is. xxxiii. 17 (R.V. margin).

² Eccles. xii. 7.

³ Burial Office.

of both in the Old Testament and in the New as "*sleep*;" as, for example, when we read in Daniel how "many of them that *sleep* in the dust of the earth shall awake;"¹ or when our Lord tells His disciples "our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*;" or when the Evangelist records how at the Crucifixion "the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which *slept*, arose;" or when S. Paul asserts that the greater part of those five hundred brethren who had witnessed the Resurrection were "fallen *asleep*," or that Christ had "become the First-fruits of them that *slept*;" or, once more, when S. Peter alludes to the sceptical objection of those who asked, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell *asleep*, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."² Christian sentiment, likewise, has enshrined the same metaphor in speaking

¹ Dan. xii. 2 ; cf. also Job vii. 21 ; Prov. iii. 24 ; Ps. vi. 5 ; xiii. 3 ; xxx. 9 ; cxv. 17, etc.

² S. Joh. xi. 11 ; S. Matt. xxvii. 52 ; 1 Cor. xv. 6, 20 ; 2 Pet. iii. 4 ; cf. also 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14 ; v. 10.

on tombstones of people "falling *asleep*," or in describing burial-grounds as "sleeping-places," or *cemeteries*. And yet if the soul is referred to in any such expressions as these, the metaphor must not be pressed beyond its intention of describing that peaceful home where "the wicked cease from troubling; and where the weary be at rest."¹ But it is really the *body*, not the soul, which *sleeps*. In quite early times the opposite opinion was held by certain heretics in Arabia, who were called for this reason Thnetopsychitæ, whose teaching was that "the separated soul is in a state of sleep, without consciousness or sensibility, until God wakens it up at the last day together with the body." Though their tenets were condemned at once by Tertullian and Origen and Church opinion generally, the same error appeared again at the Reformation, especially among the Anabaptists and Socinians. In a modified form it was held also by the Arminians, who "denied all external

¹ Job iii. 17.

activity to the soul in its separate state ;” while Luther seems to have *inclined* to the same view, expressing “it here and there, although only conjecturally and vaguely.” It is not easy to determine how far it is taught by Nonconformist bodies in England at the present day, though the notion that the soul sleeps between death and the judgment-day is certainly a very prevalent belief among the members of those communities who do not teach an immediate admission of the departed soul either into heaven or hell when it dies.

Scripture, however, lends no sanction whatever to this idea, since the soul is invariably represented as *conscious* in the under-world. Samuel’s appearance at Endor, four years after his death, to the panic-stricken Saul ;¹ Isaiah’s description of the arrival of the king of Babylon among the shades of the dead ;² Ezekiel’s picture of all the trees of Eden and Lebanon (viz. the princes) being comforted in the

¹ 1 Sam. xxviii. 13-15.

² Is. xiv. 9 ff.

under-world at the similar fate which had overtaken the cedar (viz. Pharaoh);¹ Moses and Elias holding converse with our Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration,—all combine to convince us that the soul is *awake*. In the parable, likewise, both Dives and Abraham are represented as living, thinking, speaking, and remembering the past.² Our Lord comforts the penitent thief on the Cross with the assurance that he shall be “*with Him* in paradise,”³ which would be meaningless had he been in a state of torpor. St. Peter, too, in a mysterious passage describes our Lord after death as passing into the unseen world “with all the powers of His human spirit *quickened*, and delivering His message, not to souls that were *sleeping* in unconsciousness, but awake to hear the glad tidings of redemption.”⁴ When S. Paul was caught up into Paradise, it was not to a land of *sleeping* souls that his spirit went, but to a region where he heard a language

¹ Ezek. xxxi. 16.

² S. Luc. xvi. 24, 25.

³ S. Luc. xxiii. 43.

⁴ 1 Pet. iii. 18–20.

which he found it afterwards so impossible to recall or relate.¹ And then once again (not to labour the point further), when S. John, in the apocalyptic vision, "saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God," so far from seeming to be *asleep*, they were sufficiently alive to express a yearning for something yet to come, and to cry in passionate longing for the consummation of their hope.²

Death, not the Close of the Soul's Moral Development.

Then, secondly, it appears to be a state of *progressive development*. The idea of stagnation, indeed, would run quite counter to all that is told us elsewhere of the Divine methods in nature or in grace; and if souls retain consciousness in that other world, there is every reason to suppose that they may continue to grow.³ Nay more, in some ways we may well

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 2-4.

² Rev. vi. 9-11.

³ "It has been well remarked that to the Apostolic

believe that such development is easier there than here, and that fresh possibilities will open up in this direction, which are denied them in this world. "Taking things as they seem," says Sir Edwin Arnold, "nobody knows that death stays, nor why it should stay, the development of the individual. . . . Birth gave to each of us much; death may give very much more, in the way of subtler senses to behold colours we cannot here see, to catch sounds we do not now hear, and to be aware of bodies and objects impalpable at present to us, but perfectly real. . . . It is a hundred times more reasonable to

Church the belief in the second Advent was what the expectation of death commonly is to most. Their view of the soul's career and history did not halt or falter at its departure from the body; their gaze was fixed on a more distant and more luminous horizon, even on the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And on and on until that day God will perform—S. Paul is confident of it—the work which He has begun: whatever mysteries of growth or preparation there may be within that unseen world, that cloister of the Church expectant, God will not forsake the souls He had redeemed and sanctified and made His own in this world."—Bp. Paget.

believe that she commences afresh with such delicately developed treasures, making them groundwork and stuff for splendid farther living, by process of death ; which, even when it seems accidental or premature, is probably as natural and orderly as birth, of which it is the complement ; and wherefrom, it may well be, the new-born dead arises to find a fresh world ready for his pleasant and novel, but sublimated, body ; . . . where his delighted ears hear speech and music proper to the spheres beyond, while he smiles contentedly to find how touch and taste and smell had all been forecasts of faculties accurately following upon the lowly lessons of this earthly nursery ! . . . Nor does anything but ignorance and despondency forbid the belief that the senses so etherealized and enhanced . . . would discover without much amazement sweet and friendly societies springing from, but proportionately upraised above, the old associations ; art divinely elevated ; science splendidly expanding ; bygone loves and sympathies

explaining and obtaining their purpose; activities set free for vaster cosmic service; abandoned hopes and efforts realized in rich harvests at last; despaired-of joys come magically within ready reach; regrets and repentances softened by wider knowledge, by surer foresight, and by the discovery that, although in this universe nothing can be 'forgiven,' everything may be repaid and repaired."¹

And it is not an altogether different idea which was expressed by Newman in another place, when he wrote—

“ I went to sleep ; and now I am refresh'd,
A strange refreshment : for I feel in me

¹ *Death, and Afterwards*, pp. 34-38. Cf. Butler's *Analogy*, pt. i. cap. 1 : “ Death may, in some sort and in some respects, answer to our birth ; which is not a suspension of the faculties which we had before it, or a total change of the state of life in which we existed when in the womb, but a continuation of both, with such and such great alterations. Nay, for aught we know of ourselves, of our present life and of death, death may immediately, in the natural course of things, put us into a higher, and more enlarged state of life as our birth does ; a state in which our capacities, and sphere of perception and of action, may be much greater than at present.”

An inexpressive lightness, and a sense
Of freedom, as I were at length myself,
And ne'er had been before. How still it is !
I hear no more the busy beat of time,
No, nor my fluttering breath, nor struggling pulse ;
Nor does one moment differ from the next." ¹

And development in a connection like this involves, almost of necessity, the retention of *memory*, which seems to be the faculty most closely related to our personal identity, linking together (as it does) the present with the past, and combining the new life with the old. "There is no reason for supposing," says Bishop Butler, "that the exercise of our present powers of reflection is even suspended by the act of dying" ²—death does not bathe us in the waters of Lethe—while "Son, *remember*," constituted the basis of Abraham's message to the tormented soul of Dives. Nay, on the contrary, there is every reason to think that our memory, so soon as we are liberated from the restraints of our

¹ *Verses on Various Occasions*, pp. 331, 332.

² Butler's *Analogy*, pt. i. cap. 1.

earthly surroundings, will only find its operations still further quickened and intensified—just as drowning men are said to live over again all the events of their former life in a moment as they pass before them in vivid and awful reality.¹ When all the objects and interests which helped to distract our thoughts in this life have been withdrawn, it may be that we shall be *forced* to fall back more completely upon ourselves, whether we wish it or not, and to contemplate those deeper facts of existence which we had declined to face before. In that other world we have no other alternative; it will become our only occupation, and we can no longer escape from the necessity of the task.

¹ Cf. also Martensen's *Dogmatics*, p. 458: "The kingdom of the dead . . . is a kingdom of calm thought and self-fathoming, a kingdom of *remembrance* in the full sense of the word, in such a sense, I mean, that the soul now enters into its own inmost recesses, resorts to that which is the very foundation of life, the true substratum and source of all existence."

“ Ah ! whence is this ? What is this severance ?
This silence pours a solitariness
Into the very essence of my soul ;
And the deep rest, so soothing and so sweet,
Hath something too of sternness and of pain.
For it drives back my thoughts upon their spring
By a strange introversion, and perforce
I now begin to feed upon myself,
Because I have nought else to feed upon.”¹

Then, if we have never done so before, we shall be confronted with that terrible vision of all our forgotten sins. The whole story of our broken life, the natural talents we have left unused, the grace we have neglected, the inspirations we have slighted, and the opportunities we have wasted—it will all pass in order before our eyes. And everything will look so different then when we see it as it really is—tricked-out no longer in all the meretricious adornment of false and flattering colours, or as it once appeared to the perverted judgment of our own over-indulgent self-complacency. We shall perceive as we never did in this life the

¹ Newman's *Verses on Various Occasions*, p. 332.

scars and wounds which sin has stamped on character; what guilt truly means, and our redemption has really cost; all the merciful and unintermitting interventions of Divine providence in our behalf; God's pleading with the soul in sickness, sorrow, trial; the real problem of our life, the secret of our probation, what we are and what we were meant to be;—all will be revealed without veil or medium to a consciousness which has now been quickened into an intensified activity. "Thou hast set our misdeeds before Thee: and our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance."¹ For all this will follow from the fact that we have every reason to believe that there is a continuity about our life, and a survival of memories which death helps rather to emphasize than to destroy. Death, after all, only "strips off the outer covering which once enveloped the soul"—nor does it destroy our identity when it changes our environment. As we draw our last breath

¹ Ps. xc. 8.

we do not become different beings with different sets of thoughts, feelings, impulses, or emotions—there is no violent break, but continuity throughout. And death, so far from annihilating our faculties of thinking, loving, praying, and the like, only serves to quicken, develop, and enlarge.

*Death introduces the Soul to the Scene
of its Purification.*

Then, thirdly, it will be a *state of purification*. The *nature* of this process (so far as we can understand it) must engage our thoughts later on; but we might notice at once how impossible it is to ignore the reality of a fact which reason, Scripture, and human conscience alike combine to attest. That some such purification indeed is necessary, has been the belief of the Church in all ages, and many beyond its pale; while it certainly fits in best with what is told us elsewhere of the ways of God. "It is almost impossible," says Dean Luckock, "to

form any other conclusion than that the souls of the departed pass through *some purifying process* between death and judgment.”¹ “The best of us die imperfect,” writes Bishop Gore, “and some, whose final salvation we yet confidently expect, very imperfect and ignorant. Therefore, we cannot but think that, in the waiting state, men are *cleansed* and enlightened: and this enlightening and cleansing can hardly be without *pain*.”² “Though the Romish doctrine of Purgatory,” says Martensen, “is repudiated because it is mixed up with so many crude and false positions, it nevertheless contains the truth that the intermediate state must in a purely spiritual sense be a *purgatory*, designed for the *purifying* of the soul.”³ “It is the most complete contradiction to enter into heaven,” says Möhler, “polluted with sin, whether it be covered by atonement, or

¹ *Intermediate State*, p. 62.

² *Creed of the Christian*, p. 108.

³ *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 457.

uncovered. Therefore the question obtrudes itself, How is man finally delivered from sin, and holiness established in him as a fundamentally living principle? Or, if we leave the earthly world still stained with any sort of sinful character, how are we to become *purified* from the same?"¹ We know (for God has told us so) that "there shall in no wise enter into the new Jerusalem any thing that defileth;"² we have inspired authority for asserting that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;"³ and we remember how S. John assures us that it is only "when we shall be like Him, that we shall see Him as He is."⁴ Nay more, as Newman has pointed out, "Even supposing a man of unholy life were suffered to enter heaven, *he would not be happy there. . . .* Heaven would be hell to an irreligious man. . . . How forlorn would he wander through the courts of heaven! He would find no one like

¹ *Symbolism*, p. 169.

² Rev. xxi. 27.

³ Heb. xii. 14.

⁴ 1 Joh. iii. 2.

himself; he would see in every direction the marks of God's holiness, and these would make him shudder. He would feel himself always in His presence. He could no longer turn his thoughts another way, as he does now, when conscience reproaches him. He would know that the eternal Eye was ever upon him; and that Eye of holiness, which is joy and life to holy creatures, would seem to him an Eye of wrath and punishment. God cannot change His nature. Holy He must ever be. But while He is holy, no unholy soul can be happy in heaven. Fire does not inflame iron, but it inflames straw. It would cease to be fire if it did not. And so heaven itself would be fire to those who would fain escape across the great gulf from the torments of hell." ¹

And yet if the majority of people do not die with their will so finally fixed on evil as to deserve eternal banishment from the presence of God, they certainly depart this life encompassed

¹ *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, i. pp. 3, 7, 8

by so many infirmities and defiled by so many stains as to render immediate admission to the beatific vision impossible. The best amongst us leave the world with half their work undone. Their hold on earthly things is persistent to the last. Their grasp of truth has been enfeebled by the disabling circumstances of education and early surroundings. Old faults and infirmities of temper keep reappearing to the end. The ruling passion is strong; faults committed far back in youth have bequeathed their heritage of painful consequence; the errors of childhood have left a stain on the imagination, a warp in the will, a weakness in the resolve, and a darkness in the moral perception;—so that much which has been pardoned long ago may still need the *purging discipline* of some remedial process before it has been finally expelled from the life. It is past habits which inevitably build up the fabric of character; and where the habits that have been contracted are *evil*, they leave a burden of sinful tendency

which is likely to torment us till we die. Where pride has gained the mastery in some central citadel of the life; where sloth has caught us in the grip of its enervating chains; where evil passions through long indulgence have enkindled some fiery furnace of unchaste desire; where drink has crippled the energies of the body, and weakened the resistance of the will; where anger, malice, selfishness, jealousy, have managed to usurp some position of supremacy over the conscience and the heart;—then we must expect all our life long to have to do battle with the temporal consequences of our folly. Nor have we any warrant for supposing that death itself constitutes a kind of painless furnace which cleanses the soul instantaneously from all the impurities it may have contracted in life.¹ “Dying,” it has been said, “is a

¹ This idea is certainly prevalent among Nonconformist Christians, many of whom appear to ignore altogether the intermediate state. Cf. *e.g.*, “After death, the souls of the righteous being made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, and the souls of the wicked are

physical operation, not a moral act ;” and we find no sanction whatever in reason or revelation for thinking that this process will suddenly sanctify the will in such a way as to remove all traces of the past. Omnipotence, of course, *could* efface in a moment the results of lifelong sin ; but the question is not what God *can* do, but whether we have any right to suppose that He *will*. The Divine method, so far as we can trace it in the world or life or human history, is not instantaneous change, but long discipline and slow development ; while “general observation shows that stains which have been gradually contracted are for the most part gradually removed ; and reason suggests that man’s cleansing after death will bear at least

cast into hell. . . . Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies the Scriptures acknowledgeth none” (*Westminster Confession*, xxxii.) ; and, “Protestants hold that ‘*the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory*’” (p. 59).—*Exposition of the Apostles’ Creed*, Rev. James Dodds, D.D. (Guild Text-books).

some relationship to his cleansing in this life.”¹

How natural and welcome, then, becomes the blessed hope which revelation bids us entertain, that the soul will enjoy some period of calm reflection when it passes into that unseen world, where it can survey the works and ways of Providence, where it will be purged from the awful disfigurements of sin, and where it may be slowly transfigured into something holier and better, till it reach at last the maturity of its powers and the true end of its creation—conformity to the image of God!

The Fear of Death, and its Removal.

Just one simple reflection in conclusion. It may be that a closer acquaintance with the kind of experience which is likely to await us in that world to which we are all so quickly hastening, might help us to look a little more

¹ Luckock's *Intermediate State*, p. 65.

calmly and hopefully than people sometimes do at the thought of that solemn hour when our own summons must come. If death, so far from destroying the continuity of our existence, is really the passage to some higher life, then it will follow that familiarity with the nature and prospects of that other world should help at least to mitigate (even if it fail to expel) the *fear of death* which haunts so many people until they are actually called upon to face it. There are numbers of truly good and religious persons who instinctively shrink back in almost abject terror at the very thought of its approach, and look forward to it as to some great catastrophe with feelings of the utmost apprehension and alarm. And yet, on the other hand, though such an attitude may often be both exaggerated and unreasonable, we cannot be altogether surprised, when we remember the issues involved, that it should inspire us with some sensations of shrinking and awe. For death (we need not deny it) is an *unnatural* thing.

Man was not meant by his Creator to die. It must be a solemn road, moreover, along which we can travel only once, and which leads to a goal whence no man returns. Nay, our Lord Himself shrank back in horror on the eve of His Passion from the prospect of the death which He tasted for every man;¹ while S. Paul refers to it as an "enemy"² to be conquered; an enemy which separates us roughly and rudely from the persons and objects which have entwined themselves so inseparably about our affections here; an *enemy* which inflicts a wound upon the integrity of our nature; and an *enemy* furnished with a sting,³ which makes a man shrink back almost with a shudder from the thought of its approach. It is true, no doubt, that even heathen philosophy has sometimes succeeded in training its disciples to meet death with calm confidence and self-control, and that certain convictions (such as affection, patriotism, or sense of honour) have in some cases proved

¹ Heb. ii. 9.² 1 Cor. xv. 26.³ 1 Cor. xv. 56

motives strong enough to triumph over these natural feelings of alarm ;—still this does not alter the fact that mankind *generally* draws back from the thought of it with apprehension, as from some unnatural intruder in creation which violates the original law of his constitution. Death even to good people seems almost like some perilous leap in the dark ; it assumes the shape of a shock or catastrophe to that long companionship which has linked the body to the soul ; but, above all, it is the feeling that our disembodied spirit is being launched against its will into the vast region of the unexplored (whose conditions, inhabitants, occupations are so mysterious) which really invests the thought of our dissolution with such solemn awe.

“ The dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will ;
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.”

Since it is the unknown, then, which inspires this terror in the imagination, it will follow that

to have faced the real facts of death, if it fail to rob it of its awe, will at least have helped us to meet it without panic and alarm. For if we analyse our feelings, it is not the physical pain which in most cases *precedes* our departure hence, nor yet our separation from all we have known and loved on earth, so much as the sense of *strangeness* which envelops this new and untried experience, that constitutes for the pardoned sinner the real anguish of death. If we are to believe, indeed, the testimony of the most competent authorities, there is no reason to suppose that the actual separation of soul and body is attended by any pain at all. Pliny, for example, from much clinical observation, declared it as his opinion that "the moment of death was the most exquisite instant of life." "Really, according to my observations," wrote Sir Benjamin Brodie, "the mere act of dying is seldom, in any sense of the word, a very painful process. It is true that some persons die in a state of bodily torture, as in the case of tetanus ;

that the drunkard, dying of *delirium tremens*, is haunted by terrific visions ; and that the victim of that most horrible of all diseases, hydrophobia, in addition to those peculiar bodily sufferings from which the disease has derived its name, may be in a state of terror from the supposed presence of frightful objects—which are presented to him as realities, even to the last. But these and some other instances which I might adduce, are exceptions to the general rule, which is, that both mental and bodily sufferings terminate long before the scene is finally closed.”¹ “Ah! what does it matter, after all,” said S. Vincent de Paul, “how those we love go to God, provided they go;”—and yet those whose last words have been recorded certainly seem to imply that death is a passage which may be passed through even with joyful surprise, and that when the end is reached it is less painful than they supposed. “Lord, I

¹ “Psychological Enquiries,” p. 130 (quoted in Faber’s *Creator and Creature*, p. 324).

am not solicitous of the passage," said Jeremy Taylor, "so I may get to Thee." "I have passed a conflict with my last enemy," were George Herbert's words just before the end, "and have overcome him by the merits of my Master, Jesus."¹ It is recorded that "Dr. Solander was so delighted with the sensation of perishing by extreme cold in the snow, that he always afterwards resented his rescue. Dr. Hunter, in his latest moments, grieved that he 'could not write how easy and delightful it is to die.' The late Archbishop Tait, as his 'agony' befell, quietly remarked, 'It is really nothing much, after all!' That expression of composed calm which comes over the faces of the newly dead may not be merely due to muscular relaxation. It is, possibly, a last message of content and acquiescence sent us from those who at last know a little more about it than ourselves—a message of good cheer and of pleasant promise, not to be by any means

¹ Memoir, by Izaak Walton.

disregarded.”¹ The face, smoothed of its wrinkles and pain, becomes once more like the face of a little child, sculptured into the lineaments of some unearthly beauty by the chisel of death, who seems to pronounce over its victim those words of faith and encouragement, “See how I can beautify, before I destroy—and thy brother shall rise again.”²

“He who hath bent him o’er the dead
Ere the first day of death is fled
(Before Decay’s effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers),
And marked the mild angelic air—
The rapture of repose that’s there—
The fix’d yet tender traits that streak
The languor of the placid cheek,

¹ *Death, and Afterwards*, pp. 28, 29.

² Cf. Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychol.*, p. 524: “The body of a person just dead gives a far more direct impression of soul than the body of a living person. . . . The whole internal nature of the man lies in the corpse, as if turned out before us; we look there into the depth of the soul’s struggle and of the soul’s peace under which the separation of the soul and the body ensued; and the soul still hovers, to brighten or to disfigure, over its structure so lately forsaken.”

And—but for that sad shrouded eye,
That fires not, wins not, weeps not now—
And but for that chill, changeless brow,
Where cold Obstruction's apathy
Appals the gazing mourner's heart,
As if to him it could impart
The doom he dreads, yet dwells upon—
Yes, but for these, and these alone,
Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,
He still might doubt the tyrant's power,
So fair, so calm, so softly seal'd,
The first, last look by death reveal'd !”¹

And yet if death casts its awful shadow over so many lives, it is remarkable also that the terror which it once inspired almost invariably vanishes as soon as the hour of departure arrives. “As to the actual fear of death,” says Sir Benjamin Brodie once again, “it seems to me that the Author of our existence, for the most part, gives it to us when it is intended that we should live, and takes it away from us when it is intended that we should die. Those who have been long tormented by bodily pain are generally as anxious to die as they ever were to live. So

¹ Byron, *The Giaour*.

it often is with those whose life has been protracted to an extreme old age, beyond the usual period of mortality, even when they labour under no actual disease. . . . I have myself never known," he adds, "but two instances in which, in the act of dying, there were manifest indications of the fear of death."¹ There is a thoughtful passage in one of Lord Lytton's novels, where he points out how "the illness of the body usually brings out a latent power and philosophy of the soul, which health never knows; and God has mercifully ordained it as the customary lot of nature, that in proportion as we decline into the grave, the sloping path is made smooth and easy to our feet; and every day as the films of clay are removed from our eyes, Death loses the false aspect of the spectre, and we fall at last into its arms as a wearied child upon the bosom of its mother."²

It may perhaps be impossible for any one

¹ Quoted in Faber's *Creator and Creature*, p. 325. 4

² *Ernest Maltravers*, Bk. IX. chap. iv.

who realizes the tremendous issues of life to divest himself entirely of those feelings of awe which the thought of death inspires; but if we were only to make ourselves a little more familiar with what has been told us of the nature of that other life beyond the veil, death might become to all of us an object of hope rather than of fear. If death is an "enemy," and a violation of the purpose of God, yet Jesus Christ has now for faithful Christian people "by dying destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."¹ When our human weakness shrinks from the thought of death, He comes to help us with all the sympathy of His own personal experience, Who "tasted death in all its bitterness for every man."

"If Thou, sweet Saviour, hadst not died,
Who would have dared to die?"

¹ Heb. ii. 14, 15.

But Jesus Christ has known it all, and, like the lowliest member of the family whose cause He espoused, has condescended to tread the same road as His brethren, and explore the secrets of the grave. He has grappled with all those phantoms from which that nature which is common to Him and ourselves instinctively recoils, and "by His death hath destroyed death, and by His rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life."¹

Though it may be folly, then, to ignore the real gravity of those issues which death involves, it is folly, likewise, to forget its brighter aspects for those who die in Christ's faith and fear. Death is a beginning, not an end. We shall be the same living, thinking, loving personalities as before. It will mean reunion with those we loved, and the blessed dead whose examples have helped us, or whom we have looked up to and admired. It will bring us nearer to the saints, to the holy

¹ Communion Office. Proper Preface for Easter.

Mother of God, and to Jesus Christ our Lord. It may be that to *them* will be entrusted the task of teaching us what *they* have already learnt of God's works and ways;—and who knows if those from whom we have been parted for years (a parent, wife, or child) may not be the first to welcome us as our angel carries us across the river of death into the presence of the same Jesus Who still stands in the morning on those eternal shores? ¹

It might not be a bad thing if we made up our mind to acquire some deeper realization of the life of the dead; to picture our own last agony, and what succeeds it; and, above all, by true repentance at once and completely, to rob death of its real sting; so that when our change comes, we may be able to say, with the same calm confidence that has animated thousands of the redeemed who have taken their last journey before us, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down

¹ S. Joh. xxi.

in green pastures : He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul : He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for Thou art with me : Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." ¹

¹ Ps. xxiii. 1-4.

The Cleansing Fires

THREE main opinions, according to Dr. Pusey, are held among men on the state of the soul in that other world beyond. "The Romanist, following a natural instinct of human nature, decides that almost all souls undergo a painful purification after death.¹ . . . The Ultra-Protestant, supposing all sins to be absolutely hidden and covered by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, decides as peremptorily that the departed saints are already in *full*

¹ Cf. Virgil, *Æn.*, vi. 741-747.

"Aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum cluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni ;
· · · · ·
Donec longa dies, perfecto temporis orbe,
Concretam exemit labem, purumque relinquit
Ætherium sensum, atque aurai simplicis ignem."

possession of the joys of heaven ; he conceives of them as already 'like the angels of God in heaven ;' he speaks of the 'joys of heaven' as already bestowed upon them : consistently with his theory, he leaves out of sight 'judgment to come' as well as the 'resurrection of the body.' The world now, as in Homer's time, thinks of them as 'wan shades and feeble ghosts,'¹ compassionates them as inactive, and withdrawn from *their* world, despises or forgets them.'"² The Church of England, he continues, has not accepted any of these opinions in their entirety ;—the two latter views she repudiates altogether ; while as to the first, without at all denying some purification after death, she appeals beyond certain mediæval accretions back to the more primitive faith of the ancient Church. The conscience of man, indeed, when seen at its best, has always borne its own instinctive witness to the need of *cleansing*

¹ Cf. Homer, *Od.*, x. 521, etc., νεκῶν ἀμενῆα κάρηνα.

² *Letter to the Bishop of Oxford*, pp. 188, 189.

before it could endure or enjoy the awful purity of its Creator, and it has even welcomed the idea of some painful release from the defiling power of sin beyond what is possible in this life. We have seen already that there is no ground in reason or revelation for supposing that such a result will be effected automatically by the physical process of death ; and so we want to know in a matter like this, what Scripture, as interpreted by the guidance of ecclesiastical tradition, has to teach us about this cleansing of the soul hereafter—a process which has generally been (and may most conveniently be) described as purgatory.”¹

¹ “ If the connotation of the word ‘purgatory’ could be got rid of, few would object to the name. It is in itself a very good name. . . . Until the word ‘purgatory’ can be freed from the taint that it has acquired in the course of ages, men will continue to quarrel with the word, however much they may incline to think that there is a reality which it might be taken to represent.”—Canon Mason, *Purgatory, etc.*, pp. 101, 102.

“The Intermediate State, during which the soul is being purified and fitted for the vision of God in heaven,

Purgatory in Scripture and Tradition.

In the Bible itself, perhaps, there is less on this mysterious subject than we might have anticipated; though the evidence is amply sufficient to establish the truth of a doctrine which in some shape or another has been handed down from the earliest times.

We notice, first of all, how in the Old Testament cleansing is so often described under the symbol of *fire*. Isaiah speaks of some future ordeal, "when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and

may legitimately be called a 'purgatory.'"—Sanderson *Life of the Waiting Soul*, p. 80.

"Purgatory is not a word I should myself spontaneously adopt, because it is associated with Roman theories about the future state, for which I see no foundation. But the idea of purgation, of cleansing as by fire, seems to me inseparable from what the Bible teaches us of the Divine chastisements; and though little is directly said respecting the future state, it seems to me incredible that the Divine chastisements should in this respect change their character when this visible life is ended."—*Life and Letters of Dr. Hort*, vol. ii. p. 336.

shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of *burning*;"¹ and Malachi points us on to a day when the Lord "shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."² Whatever we may think of the canonical authority of the book which records it, at least it bears witness to the current Jewish belief on sin being dealt with in another world, when Judas Maccabeus thinks it natural to send two thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem to offer a sin-offering for his guilty soldiers slain in battle, and to make "a reconciliation for the dead, that they might be delivered from sin."³ Our Lord speaks of "a prison from which there is no deliverance, until the last mite has been paid;"⁴ of one special sin so grave that it can be forgiven "neither in

¹ Is. iv. 4. ² Mal. iii. 3. ³ 2 Macc. xii. 40-45.

⁴ S. Matt. v. 25, 26; cf. also xviii. 34.

this world, neither in the world to come ;”¹ while in another difficult passage we again meet with the metaphor of fire, when He speaks of “every one being salted with *fire*.”² S. Paul, in like manner, declares how at the last “every man’s work shall be made manifest ; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by *fire*, and the *fire* shall try every man’s work of what sort it is ;” and then a little later on he adds how if our work itself is destroyed in the process, still we ourselves may “be saved, yet so as by *fire*.”³ The primary reference here is, no doubt, to the day of *Judgment*, and the early Fathers with almost universal consent deduced from such passages that the revelation of the last day will be in *fire*, and that every man will have to pass through this strict, searching, and awful ordeal, when all that is worthless in our life, character, and conversation will be *burned* away before we can be admitted into the

¹ S. Matt. xii. 32.

² S. Mark ix. 49.

³ 1 Cor. iii. 13, 15.

presence of God.¹ But on the other hand, we cannot be sure that this fire which shall accompany the judgment may not be extended over some very considerable period of time, lasting (it may be) through the intermediate state, until its final consummation at the last great day. Although God *might* quicken the conscience in such a way that all the sins we have ever committed should pass in a moment before our eyes, still the ordeal of judgment might equally well be a protracted process by which sin is only gradually burned away from the soul. "There can be no doubt," says Dr. Pusey, "that S. Paul says, that there will be suffering in the day of judgment, probably the particular judgment upon the individual soul upon its departing from the body. There is no limitation of time, during which whatever is meant under the figure of the burning of the

¹ The patristic evidence for this statement will be found in Forbes' *XXXIX. Articles*, pp. 330, 331; Luckock's *Intermediate State*, pp. 66-68; Mason's *Purgatory, etc.*, pp. 3-20.

wood, hay, stubble, shall last. The materials which symbolize it require more or less time to consume them. The image seems to represent a more or less prolonged suffering in that day, according to the greater or less grievousness of the things to be destroyed in those who are saved.”¹

Some such conviction, then, as this may be taken to represent on the whole the general teaching of the Christian Church during those centuries which immediately followed the life of our Lord, and consequently can be accepted as the consentient voice of Apostolic and Catholic tradition. S. Augustine, indeed, seems to be the first among the Fathers who distinctly enunciated his belief in a purgatory quite in the modern acceptation of the term, *i.e.* a purgatory previous to the judgment-day, though even he appears to have vacillated at times on the subject. “That something of the kind,” he writes,

¹ *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?*
pp. 111, 112.

“may befall us after this life is not incredible. The question may, at any rate, be asked whether it be so. We may find, or we may fail to find, that some of the faithful, by means of a purgatorial fire, are saved more or less speedily in proportion as they have cared more or less for the good things that perish.”¹ It was S. Augustine likewise who “was the first to distinguish clearly between purgatory and hell—hell retributive, and purgatory corrective; hell never ending, and purgatory ending with the judgment-day; hell for the unchristian world and for great sinners among Christians, purgatory for Christians who in spite of weaknesses have been true at bottom to their faith. That he himself believed the existence of such a purgatory is clear; yet he treats it only as an opinion, which ‘perhaps is true.’ . . . The influence of S. Augustine was sufficient to establish that opinion.”²

¹ *Encheiridion*, lxvii. ff.

² Mason, *Purgatory, etc.*, pp. 38, 39.

It was not until more than another century had elapsed, however, that this great Church tradition became at last crystallized into something like formal shape, when S. Gregory the Great laid it down as dogmatic truth that "for certain lighter faults, *there is a purgatorial fire before the judgment.*"¹ In mediæval times this teaching was still further systematized by the Schoolmen, who speculated more widely (as was their wont) on the details of this mysterious subject, dividing the souls of men into five classes, who were located according to their appropriate condition—

1. First, there was *Paradise*, the abode of martyrs and saints who died without need of purification.² To this place were generally

¹ *Dial.*, iv. 39.

² Cf. Note C in Tertullian (*Library of the Fathers*), pp. 116 ff. : "The ancient Fathers . . . say mostly, that the very Apostles and Patriarchs are not yet crowned ; . . . they teach that they 'wait for us ;' . . . that the reward is not before the resurrection ; . . . that 'the judgment is not at once after death ;' that 'the heavens are not open, until the earth pass away ;' that they 'see not the

assigned also the souls of the Patriarchs and other holy men who lived under the Old Dispensation, and had been made to participate in the benefits of Christ's finished sacrifice by His descent into Hades (1 Pet. iii. 18-20).

2. There was *Infernum*, the great abyss "prepared for the devil and his angels,"¹ with its vestibule of Hades which is referred to as the scene of the suffering of Dives,² where the souls of those who died impenitent and have fatally failed to correspond with the purpose of their creation, endure already some foretaste of those torments which will be their unending portion hereafter.

unchangeable God, as the holy angels see Him. . . . Even as late as St. Bernard it was held that, in the intermediate state, the saints see the Humanity of our Lord, not His Divinity until after the resurrection. . . . The Council of Florence, however, defined that the 'souls which have either contracted no spot of sin after baptism, or which, after contracting it, have been, either in or out of the body, cleansed, are received presently into heaven, and clearly behold the Triune Lord, differently according to their merits; those who die in actual mortal sin, or in original sin, descend presently into hell, yet are differently punished.'

¹ S. Matt. xxv. 41.

² S. Luc. xvi. 23.

3. Then comes the *Limbus*¹ *Patrum*, the place which Dante has called "the outer zone of hell," where the souls of those who lived and died under the pre-Christian Dispensation are detained, and who received no accession of happiness from our Lord's visit to the realms of the dead.

4. The *Limbus Infantium*—a receptacle for the souls of infants who died unbaptized.

5. And lastly, *Purgatory*, which was the abode of those who died in Christ's faith and fear, and yet whose failings and imperfections needed correction and some purification through pain before they were ready for admission into heaven.

The details concerning purgatory as a doctrine, however, were never authoritatively formulated until the Council of Florence in 1434, though the general teaching of the scholastic age implied that its sufferings were very severe. S. Thomas Aquinas, for example, the greatest of the Schoolmen, asserted that "the pains of purgatory as far in excess of any that are

¹ Limbus = border, or place of restraint.

suffered in this life, and that they are not only endued with a cleansing power for the removal of sinful stains, but also avail for the satisfaction of guilt.”¹ It was to the same period also that we can trace this new aspect of purgatory which had gradually grown up, and to which S. Thomas here refers ; for though many of the Fathers imply that there is a state of purgation for souls between their death and resurrection to cleanse from stain of sin, yet none of them held that it availed for discharging the *temporal penalties of mortal sin* which had not in this life been fully paid.²

¹ Luckock, *Intermediate State*, p. 81.

² “ To remove, or at least to diminish, this controversy, let the Romanists neither hold themselves *as an article of faith*, nor obtrude as such upon others, their opinion about a punitive purgatory, since, as has been shown above, it is grounded on no sure foundations either in Scripture or in the Fathers of the first centuries, or in the ancient Councils. Protestants, on the other hand, who disapprove of this opinion, and indeed rightly and deservedly, ought not, however, to condemn it as open heresy or impiety.”—Bp. Forbes, “*Considerationes Modestæ*,” vol. ii. p. 139.

It can hardly be doubted that in course of time some very grave abuses and superstitions had gathered round the popular teaching, which our Articles not merely condemned as "Romish" but also desired to abolish entirely, yet without necessarily casting any reflection on the primitive belief of which these were but the caricature and the perversion. It was commonly taught, for example, in those days, that the souls in purgatory are tortured with pains, the least of which is infinitely more terrible than anything we can suffer on earth; that the souls are tormented by material fire, and even by devils; that the Pope could grant indulgences to shorten the pains of purgatory; or that the Blessed Virgin Mary, S. Peter, or one of the other saints, descend on certain occasions into purgatory and deliver souls who have done them honour here on earth. A great deal of all this was deliberately put aside by the Roman Church itself at the Council of Trent, and many of the worst abuses were repudiated. All that

it has authoritatively laid down by formal conciliar decree is that "there is a purgatory, and the souls detained there are helped by prayer, and chiefly by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar; and the holy Synod enjoins that the more difficult and subtle questions, and those which tend not to edification, and from which for the most part there is no increase of piety, be excluded from popular discourses. In like manner, such as are uncertain, or which labour under an appearance of error, let them not allow either to be made public or discussed. But those things which tend to a certain kind of curiosity or superstition, or which savour of filthy lucre, let them prohibit as scandals and stumbling-blocks of the faithful."¹ The *nature* of this process is not here defined, though the practical teaching of the Roman Church is more explicit as a rule, and as embodied in the Catechism of the same Council asserts, that "there is a purgatorial *fire* where the souls of the righteous

¹ Session xxv., Decretum de Purgatorio.

(piorum) being tormented (cruciatæ) for a definite time are purified, that an entrance may be given them into their eternal home, where nothing that is defiled may enter in." ¹

*Pain and Peace, the Two Aspects
of Purgatory.*

As we look back over the past history of the Christian religion we can hardly fail to notice how slowly (as a rule) the Church has apprehended all the aspects and bearings of each particular truth. The Catholic faith, of course, in all its ordered completeness, was "once for all delivered unto the saints" ² as a sacred trust, in such a way as to admit of no further addition or alteration; and yet this does not militate against the fact that the full meaning of that original deposit has only gradually been appreciated and realized. The rise of heresy, the controversies of each successive age, or the piety of Christian teachers, all in their turn have

¹ Pt. I. cap. vi. quest. 3.

² Jude 3 (R.V.).

helped to discover fresh ways of looking at familiar facts, or call attention to new aspects which these truths were found to include. And if this is true of such fundamental articles of our belief as the Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement, it is true also in a lesser degree of the matter before us now. For regarding the subject as a whole, we observe that two main aspects of our purgation after death (by no means incompatible with each other) have come into prominence at different times in the Western Church, whereas the complete truth (of which either is only the partial embodiment) is perhaps to be found in their combination.

1. First, there is that aspect of peaceful security which came home so persuasively to the hearts of those early Christians who were exposed to incessant risk of persecution, and looked forward to that happy haven of rest which presented to their minds such a contrast to this scene of disorder and strife. "The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God"—that

was the side on which they loved to dwell—"and there shall no torment touch them."¹ They remember how in paradise—and they had their Master's warrant for thinking so—Lazarus was "comforted," while Dives was "tormented."² It was a voice from heaven which had told S. John to "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours."³ "To depart, and to be with Christ," S. Paul felt sure was "far better,"⁴ because it brought him into a state of closer union with his Lord ; just as he expresses the same conviction in another place, when he speaks of being "willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."⁵ And this was the reason doubtless why the ancient Fathers would describe those who had gone before as in the "refreshment of awaiting the Resurrection," "at rest in a hidden

¹ Wisd. iii. 1.² S. Luke xvi. 25.³ Rev. xiv. 13.⁴ Phil. i. 23.⁵ 2 Cor. v. 8.

receptacle," "in eternal rest," "in the keeping of the Lord," "in an invisible place appointed them by God," "somewhere in a better place," or "cherished in peaceful abodes;" while the burden of primitive prayer was for the "rest, sleep, repose of departed souls," that they might enjoy "a mansion in God's kingdom," that they may lie down "in green pastures," that their "sins may not be remembered," that "perpetual light may shine upon them," and that they may have "a speedy purification from their sins." And all this assuredly represents one aspect of that state, which it is still important to emphasize. A knowledge that our time of trial is safely over; the sense that we can have no more temptation, bitter conflict with sin, or the dread of displeasing God; the relief at our final separation from the toils of earth, with all its anguish and disappointment, the contact of evil surroundings, and all the seductive attractions of this wicked world; the consciousness that our pardon is sealed, forgiveness assured, and

the awful suspense or the risk of relapse at last is over ; the conviction that however long we have to wait, the Beatific Vision will in the end be ours ; the unspeakable satisfaction of being gradually conformed to the Divine image as we witness those sinful stains which have left their impress on our life, being silently yet surely effaced ;—all this might well make us anticipate even with joy and gratitude whatever suffering may be incurred in the passage of our soul to its full consummation and its final bliss.

2. But there is another aspect also which was developed in much later times. When manifested in its grosser shape, it may best be illustrated by those wayside pictures which are still so common in some parts of Europe, where purgatory is represented as involving all the torments of hell, except that it is not eternal, and as so terrific that it is doubtful whether the popular imagination could detect very much difference between such sufferings and those of the lost. Mediæval artists would delight to

expend all their efforts in depicting the writhings of the dead in the flames that encircled them, while innumerable visions that were recorded detailed with a ghastly minuteness the various kinds of torture that these souls were called upon to endure. Such descriptions were meant to bring home to the mind and conscience of the Christian the awful character "of the pain of sense which the soul is mysteriously permitted to endure. The fire is the same fire as that of hell, created for the single and express purpose of giving torture. Our earthly fire is as painted fire compared to it. Besides this, there is a special and indefinable horror to the embodied soul in becoming the prey of this material agony. The sense of imprisonment, close and intolerable, and the intense palpable darkness, are additional features in the horror of the scene. . . . Angels are represented as active executioners of God's awful justice ; while some have even held that the demons were permitted to touch and harass the spouses of Christ in

those ardent fires.”¹ It is not easy to determine how far this coarser form of description survives in modern Romanism, either here or in other countries; but that it has not entirely disappeared from the popular system is evident, when such a writer as Faber can assert that “so far as pain goes, the pains of purgatory are a participation of hell, and in awful vicinity to it,”² can speak of “flames sobbing on the shore of purgatory, like the chafing of the tide upon the rocks—the awful dreary light of the far-stretching land of fire,”³ or can put such sentiments as these into a popular hymn—

“In pains beyond all earthly pains,
Favourites of Jesus! there they lie
Letting the fire wear out their stains,
And worshipping God’s purity.

“See, how they bound amid their fires,
While pain and love their spirits fill;
Then with self-crucified desires
Utter sweet murmurs, and lie still.”⁴

¹ Faber’s *All for Jesus*, p. 348.

² *Notes on Doctrinal Subjects*, ii. p. 359.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 366, 367.

⁴ *Hymns*, 56, “The Queen of Purgatory.”

Such statements as these present, at any rate, a striking contrast to that prayer which still stands in the venerable canon of the Roman Liturgy as the witness to a more primitive belief, as it pleads for "God's servants who are gone before us, with the sign of Faith, and *rest in the sleep of peace.*"¹

And yet, after all, these exaggerated descriptions, which find no counterpart in the belief of the early Church, are only the crude and vulgar perversion of a great truth which they seek to embody in a shape which it is difficult to justify. For though we are told nothing as to the nature of the purifying pain which is there to be endured, there seems every reason to think that the process whereby the stains of sin are purged away from the penitent soul, together with a deeper longing for God and a truer sense of the hideous defilement of moral evil, must be accompanied by some measure of real

¹ "Qui nos præcesserunt cum signo fidei, et dormiunt in signo pacis."

suffering. Death introduces us into a state of profound penitence, and since it is impossible to dissociate entirely the idea of penitence and pain, it is difficult to see how some such element can be excluded entirely from our life beyond. The sight of our past history spread like a map before our eyes ; the misuse of opportunities, the knowledge of our own utter sinfulness when confronted with God's awful purity ; the mingled story of Divine pleading and human rebellion, of self-indulgence met by merciful chastisement, of wilful disobedience answered by repeated pardon, of wayward wandering followed by tardy repentance ;—are calculated to provide us with very painful memories, which must inevitably strike sorrow home to the enlightened conscience and the contrite heart. "No purgatorial flames that are imagined," it has been truly said, "could cause such anguish as this sword of penitence which both rends and mends the soul." ¹ "For Thou, O God, hast proved us :

¹ Mason's *Faith of the Gospel*, p. 364.

Thou also hast tried us, like as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the snare, and laidest trouble upon our loins. Thou sufferedst men to ride over our heads: we went through fire and water, and Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.”¹

*The Truth to be found in their
Combination.*

There are three eminent persons in whose writings these two aspects have been wonderfully and beautifully combined.

1. First, there is the famous treatise of S. Catherine of Genoa, who appears to have led the way in this direction. “I do not believe,” she says, “that it would be possible to find any joy comparable to that of a soul in purgatory, except the joy of the blessed in paradise—a joy which goes on increasing day by day, as God more and more flows in upon the soul, which He does abundantly in proportion as every

¹ Ps. lxvi. 9-11.

hindrance to His entrance is consumed away. . . . As far as their will is concerned, these souls cannot acknowledge the pain as such, so completely are they satisfied with the ordinance of God, so entirely is their will one with it in pure charity. On the other hand, they suffer a torment so extreme, that no tongue could describe it, no intellect could form the least idea of it, if God has not made it known by special grace.”¹

. . . Again, “But still I see that the Being of God is so pure (far more than one can imagine), that should a soul see in itself even the least mote of imperfection, it would rather cast itself into a thousand hells than go with that spot into the presence of the Divine Majesty. Therefore, seeing purgatory ordained to take away such blemishes, it plunges therein, and deems it a great mercy that it can thus remove them.”²

. . . Again, “It is true that the overflowing love

¹ *Treatise on Purgatory* (Cardinal Manning’s edition), pp. 5, 6, 8.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 23.

of God bestows upon the souls in purgatory a happiness beyond expression great: but then this happiness does not in the least diminish the pain—rather the pain is constituted by this love finding itself impeded; the more perfect the love of which God makes the soul capable, the greater the pain. In this manner the souls in purgatory at the same time experience the greatest happiness and the most excessive pain; and one does not prevent the other.”¹ . . . Again, “These souls are so closely united, so transformed into the will of God, that in all things they are satisfied with His most holy decree; and were a soul presented before God with ever so little to purge away, it would suffer grievous hurt and a torment worse than ten purgatories.”² . . . Hence they suffer all their pains gladly, and would not rid them of a single pang, knowing that is justly deserved and

¹ *Treatise on Purgatory* (Cardinal Manning’s edition), pp. 35, 36.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 39.

righteously ordained: they no more complain of God, so far as their will is concerned, than if they were in life eternal.”¹ . . . And once more, “No sufferings could make me wish it otherwise than God has determined for me; I remain in my prison without a wish to come out till God has done all that I need. My happiness is that God shall be satisfied; and the greatest pain I could endure would be being excluded from His ordinance, for I see how just and merciful it is.”²

2. And the second is S. Francis de Sales, whose teaching sounds almost like an echo of S. Catherine’s. “Most people who fear purgatory so much,” he used to say, “do so out of self-love and self-interest, rather than from thought of God;” and he attributed this error to the habit of preachers dwelling on its sufferings, to the exclusion of the rest and happiness which the soul experiences therein. “No doubt that

¹ *Treatise on Purgatory* (Cardinal Manning’s edition) p. 43.

² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

suffering," he writes, "is keener than we can know in this world, but so too are its inner consolations. The soul there finds itself in constant union with God. Its will is so transformed by God's will that it can desire nought save what He wills, so that were paradise open to it, such a soul would plunge into hell sooner than appear before God till its stains were purged away. Its purification there is not only voluntary, but it wills to be there in such manner and as long as God pleases. It loves God beyond itself, and beyond everything, with a full, pure, disinterested love. It enjoys the ministry of the holy angels. Its salvation is assured, and its hope can never be confounded. The very bitterness of its purgation is attended with a feeling of peace, so that if there be keen suffering, there is also a heavenly love and sweetness which makes a very paradise. It is a state rather to be desired than feared—feared only because it is delay in the blessed consummation of all things; that is seeing and loving

God perfectly, and so seeing and loving, worshipping and glorifying Him to all eternity.”¹

3. And the third is that oft-quoted passage from “The Dream of Gerontius,” where the angel is represented as carrying the soul to the presence of its Judge.

“It is the face of the Incarnate God
Shall smite thee with that keen and subtle pain ;
And yet the memory which it leaves will be
A sovereign febrifuge to heal the wound ;
And yet withal it will the wound provoke,
And aggravate and widen it the more.

What then—if such thy lot—thou seest thy Judge,
The sight of Him will kindle in thy heart
All tender, gracious, reverential thoughts.
Thou wilt be sick with love, and yearn for Him,
And feel as though thou couldst but pity Him,
That one so sweet should e’er have placed Himself
At disadvantage such, as to be used
So vilely by a being so vile as thee.
There is a pleading in His pensive eyes
Will pierce thee to the quick, and trouble thee.
And thou wilt hate and loathe thyself ; for, though
Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast sinn’d,
As never thou didst feel ; and wilt desire
To slink away, and hide thee from His sight :

¹ *The Spirit of S. Francis de Sales*, iii. § 7.

And yet wilt have a longing aye to dwell
Within the beauty of His countenance.
And these two pains, so counter and so keen,—
The longing for Him, when thou seest Him not ;
The shame of self at thought of seeing Him,—
Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory.”¹

And then, as the eager spirit darts from the
angelic hands to the feet of Jesus, while—

“scorched and shrivell’d, now it lies
Passive and still before the awful Throne . . .
Consumed, yet quicken’d, by the glance of God,”

it craves to be carried hence, that the Divine
work may be completed in its soul.

“Take me away, and in the lowest deep
 There let me be,
And there in hope the lone night-watches keep,
 Told out for me.
There, motionless and happy in my pain,
 Lone, not forlorn,—
There will I sing my sad perpetual strain,
 Until the morn.
There will I sing and soothe my stricken breast,
 Which ne’er can cease
To throb, and pine, and languish, till possess
 Of its Sole Peace.

¹ Newman’s *Verses on Various Occasions*, pp. 358–360.

There will I sing my absent Lord and Love :—

Take me away,

That sooner I may rise, and go above,

And see Him in the truth of everlasting day.”¹

Its Bearing on our Conduct in this Life.

Among the many obvious duties which the subject suggests, there are three very simple ones which might be briefly noticed in conclusion.

1. And, firstly, this line of thought will help to *invest that other world with an intenser interest* than it generally excites. The popular conception of the Intermediate State as one of aimless inactivity, where our consciousness is well-nigh suspended, or where, at any rate, all those energies and activities which exercised the soul in this life are reduced to a condition of moral torpor, has succeeded in robbing the subject of everything which might naturally appeal to

¹ Newman's *Verses on Various Occasions*, pp. 366, 367.

the intelligence of reasonable creatures. People who have spent the greater part of their life in work for others, or who have found their chief happiness in the improvement of the talents with which God has entrusted them, are almost repelled by the thought of a future where all their faculties are to lie dormant, and where they can find no further scope for the development of those wonderful powers which made up so large a part of their probation on earth. A conviction, indeed, that the unseen world will introduce us to a renewed intercourse with the blessed dead, will provide us with wider opportunities for service and ministration, and will afford some largely extended sphere for the exercise of the intellect and affections, clothes at once our whole conception of that future existence with a fresh attractiveness;—but how far more thrilling still does it become when we have learnt to realize how in that life the mind will be trained to higher knowledge, the alloy of sinful habit will be burned away, and

the character will be gradually developed into that holiness without which the Beatific Vision would be intolerable!

2. Then, secondly, it serves as a stimulus to *effort* in this life, by reminding us that the cultivation of character is by far the most important object on which we can concentrate our attention during our earthly probation. What we make ourselves here, for good or bad, is the only thing we can expect to carry away with us when we die—"their works do follow them."¹ If there be this intimate connection between the present and the future, and if our life in this world and the next are not separated by some yawning chasm which destroys continuity, then it will make all the difference possible how we are using our opportunities *now*. So far as we know, this is the *only* time given us for laying foundations on which God can erect some lasting and valuable superstructure hereafter;—so that the building up of

¹ Rev. xiv. 13.

character is the only conceivable preparation any of us can be making for the life beyond. All the things which usually engross so much time and thought in this world—our knowledge, our reputation, our accomplishments, our wealth, our success;—these can have no reference whatever to that other life, except in so far as they have contributed to form the basis on which God can build. It is in our power to raise up some crazy edifice of mere “wood, hay, stubble”—those utterly worthless erections which must inevitably be swept away by the first gust of that devouring flame; or else the “gold, silver, precious stones”¹—those imperishable elements which can stand the searching, penetrating test of the judgment fire. At that day we shall not be examined as to what we had or knew or suffered—for all these will then have become a matter of supreme indifference, except in so far as they have furnished us with those lasting moral qualities which they were meant to

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 12.

develop or produce. But what *will* be of infinite consequence to us at the last, is the impression which time has stamped upon the character and the will, making us (in some sense) what through eternity we must continue to be. It is this, surely, which invests the details of our present life with a responsibility such as, when we realize it, can only be described as awful and overwhelming. Anyhow, we shall find plenty with which to employ ourselves in this direction as long as life may last, and we can be doing something here, by God's grace, to stamp a mark on the soul which we could wish to be indelible. Most of us have our ambitions and ideals ;—but whatever else we may set ourselves to acquire, at least patience, humility, honesty, truth, unselfishness, purity, constitute a possession of permanent value which it is worth while taking some trouble to secure. If we set ourselves seriously to the task of correcting our faults—bad temper, a bitter tongue, love of our own way, indolence,

jealous feelings, and the like—whatever the effort may cost us, it is helpful to remember that we are engaging in an enterprise which must be *begun* here and may be completed hereafter, before we have reached our own sphere of moral perfection or are ready for the unveiled vision of God. If this life is only a school for the development of virtue and the correction of vice, we can find no higher employment in this world for all the exertions of our created activities than the cultivation of those moral qualities which will last beyond the tomb. As we “pass through the things that are temporal,” our wisdom consists in keeping the eternal realities as a constant vision before our eyes, if we would widen, deepen, chasten our whole conception of human life and its boundless possibilities, or if we would make our short probation here what God would have it be—a useful prelude to what by His grace and mercy we may become hereafter.

3. And then, lastly, it should enkindle in us

a deeper *sense of gratitude*. Besides all those other innumerable blessings which should elicit our thankfulness ("our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life"), there are three great mercies for which most of us have to praise God continually. First, there is the fact that we were *baptized in infancy* before our stubborn will could put any conscious obstacle in the way of God's grace, as He came to secure almost prematurely and (as it were) by stealth the love and service of our unconscious soul. It is wonderful to look back on the state of our own personal innocence as something which really once existed;—and then afterwards as we grew up to commit *wilful* sin, there was another sacrament specially ordained for our restoration—there was *Penance*, that fountain of mercy opened "for sin and for uncleanness"¹—that "second plank after shipwreck," as it has been called—that cleansing stream of pardon in which the guilt of our perverse and blinded

¹ Zech. xiii. 1.

folly can be purged away. And then, last of all, comes *Purgatory* for those who die in a state of grace—that “eighth sacrament of fire”—which illustrates so pathetically the awful purity and tender compassion of our God. “But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”¹ How earnestly, therefore, we ought to look forward to that time when all our clinging habits of evil shall disappear, and those white robes of purity can be again restored, and we shall be able to stand without shame and confusion before Him “in Whose presence is the fulness of joy, and at Whose right hand there is pleasure for evermore!”²

¹ Job xxiii. 10.

² Ps. xvi. 12.

Our Hopes beyond the Veil

A QUESTION was put to our Lord on one occasion during His ministry by some chance inquirer from among His audience, "Lord, are there few that be saved?"¹ It is a question which has been repeated again and again as the centuries roll by, and it has certainly received some very different answers. When we look out on the state of the world at the present time and find that Christians of all denominations put together constitute only some quarter of the whole population of the globe, or when we remember how miserably small a proportion among these are leading anything like a life answerable to their high calling, it is almost inevitable that we should like to know what will become of all

¹ S. Luc. xiii. 23.

this godless mass of humanity hereafter. Our Lord, in His reply, it is true, so far from encouraging speculation on a subject about which we can know so little, seems rather to suggest that our time would be better spent in concentrating all our efforts on the duty in life He has assigned us, than in making futile guesses at the relative number of the saved and the lost. "Strive," He urges them, "to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."¹ And yet this need not mean that we are precluded altogether from looking humbly and reverently into the mysteries of the Divine purpose, provided that we recognize the limitations of our knowledge. But what appears to make an inquiry so conducted both necessary and profitable, is the fact that so many erroneous opinions have become prevalent on the subject, and that Calvinism, which condemns the great majority of mankind to

¹ S. Luc. xiii. 24.

eternal perdition (though resting on no reasonable foundation), is still the creed of many Christians, and has left its taint behind it even in quarters where its disastrous teaching has been repudiated. If the Intermediate State, moreover, be anything like what the Church believes it to be, we naturally *suspect* that God may have larger purposes for many of His creatures in that other world beyond what has been clearly revealed; and that though this life is the only scene of human probation, yet there is another state of existence which affords God fresh opportunities for dealing with those who can hardly be said to have known Him, and yet never deliberately rejected Him, here—a world where training, purification, and discipline do more than anything else to explain some of the darkest enigmas of life.

*The Future Condition of the Heathen
World.*

And first, does Scripture throw out any hints

as to the future fate of heathendom? or can we trace in the Bible any suggestions of wider hopes for people who have died without being brought into covenant with God, through no fault of their own?

We have become so familiar in our own age with the thought that the heathen world is under some Divine (though, of course, vastly inferior) dispensation, that we find it difficult to realize how slow this conviction has been in gaining possession of the Christian world. People now have got hold of the idea "that all knowledge of religion is from God, and not only that which the Bible has transmitted to us. That there was never a time when God had not spoken to man, and told him to a certain extent his duty. . . . That at no time He left Himself without witness in the world, and that in every nation He accepts those who fear and obey Him. . . . That there is something true and divinely revealed in every religion all over the earth, overloaded, as it may be, and at

times even stifled by the impieties which the corrupt will and understanding of man have incorporated with it. . . . That the Word and the Sacraments are the characteristic of the elect people of God; but that all men have had more or less the guidance of tradition, in addition to those internal notions of right and wrong which the Spirit has put into the heart of each individual.”¹ “He hath not dealt *so* with any nation: neither have the heathen knowledge of His laws.”²

And yet, in the early days of Christianity, the general opinion was that there could be no salvation (here or hereafter) outside the visible Church. Had not our Lord implied as much when He said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” or that “No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me”?³ What else

¹ Newman's *Arians of the Fourth Century*, pp. 79, 80.

² Ps. cxlviii. 20.

³ S. Joh. iii. 5; xiv. 6.

could S. Peter have meant in asserting, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"?¹ Or why should S. Paul speak of the Gentiles as "having no hope, and without God in the world"?² And yet side by side with such passages as these there are others, whose meaning was only gradually apprehended, which breathe the language of a wider hope. "God had overlooked" (A.V. "winked at") "the times of ignorance;" Jesus Christ was a "Light which lighteth *every man* that cometh into the world;" while S. Peter declares how "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."³ If the great weight of S. Augustine's authority has been responsible for the gloomy views which prevailed on this subject, not only in mediæval theology,

¹ Acts iv. 12.

² Eph. ii. 12.

³ Acts xvii. 30; S. Joh. i. 9; Acts x. 34, 35.

but also among the Calvinistic Protestants of the Reformation, the change which has gradually crept over Christendom can trace its origin to Dante, who "rose in rebellion against the prevailing indifference of the age, which could consign the millions of heathendom without any compunction to irretrievable ruin."¹ "There is something almost pathetic," wrote Dean Plumptre, "in the way in which Dante, as the great representative of the theology of the Mediæval Church, at once accepts the dogma and seeks to minimize its harshness. The children whose sighs he hears in the outer regions of the Inferno have no pain but that of unsatisfied desire. . . . Still more suggestive is the form in which he states the doubt that had forced itself unbidden on his mind as to the justice of the Divine decree which appeared to exclude men, for no fault of theirs, from any share in the eternal blessedness. . . . The only answer given to the doubt is that man may not

¹ Luckock's *Intermediate State*, p. 177.

dare to fathom the abyss of the Divine judgments with the plummet of his human reason—

‘Nay, who art thou, who on thy bench dost sit,
To judge with thy short vision of a span
The thousand miles of distance infinite?’

. . . The doubt which Dante thus stifled continued, in spite of the authority which repressed it, to work in the minds of men.”¹ But it was not until the seventeenth century that Christianity in our own country managed to emancipate itself completely from views which seem to find little warrant in revelation, and to come into very dangerous collision with all that is told us of the justice and righteousness of God. For how much stress is laid in all parts of Scripture on this aspect of the Divine nature! “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” “Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?” “Righteousness and equity are the habitation of His seat.”² Where Scripture, then, has not taught us to think otherwise,

¹ *The Spirits in Prison*, pp. 165, 167.

² Gen. xviii. 25; Job viii. 3; Ps. xcvi. 2.

and the Church has refused to dogmatize, we are at liberty to follow the dictates of a healthy conscience when it suggests that it would not be in accordance with what is told us of the Divine character elsewhere to believe that God "will consign to eternal punishment vast masses of mankind who in this world have never been taught the better way, or who have been born, grown up, and died without any opportunity of entering into covenant with" Himself.¹ Is it not far more reasonable to suppose that the terms of salvation are addressed to those who are capable of receiving it, and that consequently we have no grounds for determining anything about the future of those who have been excluded in this world from the covenanted means of grace? "The absoluteness of Christianity," says Dorner, "demands that no one be judged before Christianity has been made accessible and brought home to him."² Some,

¹ Luckock's *Intermediate State*, p. 181.

² *System of Christian Doctrine*, iv. 409.

indeed (and these by no means untrustworthy authorities), have supposed that the Intermediate State may provide a *probation* for those who have been without such opportunities during their earthly state. "I cannot but think," said Canon Carter, "that there must be a *further probation* for those who have none really here."¹ "A righteous judgment," writes Dean Luckock, "presupposes of necessity an adequate probation; if this has been withheld from any man in this life, through circumstances over which he had no control, *an extension of time may be granted after death*; but wherever the choice of good has been fully offered and with such force and persuasion that a man might reasonably be expected to take it, if he should resist the grace of God and, trampling His offer under foot, accept the evil, the consequences are eternal. No new test, no opportunity of retrieving the past, no second probation, is possible: the door of repentance has been

¹ Staley's *Practical Religion*, p. 144 (note).

closed against him.”¹ And yet there seems

¹ Luckock's *Intermediate State*, pp. 207, 208 ; cf. also p. 183 : “We conclude, therefore, that there will be some other sphere of probation for the heathen than that in the body in this present world ;” and also a deeply interesting paper delivered at the Church Congress at Manchester in 1888 : “We fail to find any traces of a hope of restoration for those who have *rejected* the offer of salvation by a deliberate exercise of that free-will which God has given to every man, and with their eyes wide open to the consequences of such rejection. . . . It is, we believe, against the whole tenor of revelation to admit the possibility of a *second probation* in the life to come. . . . But besides these two classes of the faithful and the unfaithful, there is a vast multitude without ever having been, properly speaking, put upon their trial. . . . Our own conviction is that the offer of salvation in and through the Name of Jesus will be made to the heathen in the Intermediate State. . . . The second is composed of those who have lived the lives of heathen in Christian lands—not from wilful resistance to proffered grace, but from ignorance of the better way. . . . Justice demands that these should be placed in the same category with the heathen, and if not in this life, yet in the next they should have a *proper trial* and at least a *free choice* for the acceptance or rejection of what is the highest good.” The Dean is careful to guard against the idea of a *second* probation for anybody, but insists on a probation elsewhere for those whom he conceives to have none here. Whether, then, we are prepared to accept this view or not, it is hardly a fair criticism of his position to say that

to be a danger in tampering with the idea of a probation in any shape beyond the grave, of which we find no hint either in Scripture or Catholic tradition. *This* life is revealed to us as the time of our probation, and, so far as we know, it will in no case be extended. Time is long enough to test character, to exhibit the moral bent of the will, and to decide whether the whole attitude of mind and heart is, or is not, one of wilful and inveterate rebellion against God. Judgment is final and irrevocable at death, and every one will stand before that tribunal to "receive the things *done in his body*, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."¹ God's sentence at that awful hour (S. Paul plainly declares²), so far from

"the probability suggested at a recent Church Congress, though favoured by the great Bishop Butler, that special knowledge of Christ will be made to the heathen in the after-death state, seems to imply that, to *them*, there would be granted a second probation."—*The Faithful Departed*, by the Rev. D. Moore (S.P.C.K.).

¹ 2 Cor. v. 10.

² Rom. ii. 6-16.

being dependent on human privilege or on outward distinction, will be determined by a man's works and the opportunities he enjoyed. The Gentiles, who had no *special* revelation, if they have been unfaithful to the light they possessed, will perish because they have so sinned, and not as condemned by a Law they never knew; while the Jews, who had been entrusted with the oracles of God, will be judged by that Law, and either rewarded and condemned. The Holy Ghost visits and deals with every soul of man (Christian or Gentile) who enters on his trial-time, and God will judge men according to the measure of light they may have received. However well, then, the idea of a further probation after this life in certain cases may fall in with our human conceptions of what God might appropriately arrange, we have no warrant for saying this will be the case. But though we have no ground for believing that conversion can *begin* in the Intermediate State, yet we may well hope

that for those who have responded to God's gracious inspirations so far as they knew how, and whose wills were at the last and on the whole on the right side, there may not only be infinite mercies in death, but some further discipline of the soul hereafter through the bracing action of God's love, a development of the moral being, and a preparation for the vision of God.

*The Heathen Masses in Christian
Countries.*

But then, again, have we any right to extend the same charitable hope to persons born amid Christian surroundings, and yet living practically heathen lives?

Those who have been engaged in work for souls among the outcast population of our large towns, must sooner or later find the conviction forced home upon themselves that vast numbers live, grow up, and die in our big cities who (often through no fault of their own) are

condemned to remain entirely outside the range of religious influence. There are myriads of people living in Christian countries who, if we may judge the matter from a human standpoint, never seem in this world to have had a fair chance. They were "born in sin," and of sinful parents; they were cradled in crime, and nurtured in wickedness; they have been surrounded from infancy with degrading sights, while oaths and blasphemy were the first words that sounded in their ears; and it may be they have inherited a nature which has been painfully crippled by the drunkenness and impurity of their parents. There are so many obstacles, even under more favourable conditions, to the entrance of truth into a man's heart; and where, as is so often the case, the life is started under such disabilities, the conscience has been seared and scarred, the will has been still further weakened by self-indulgence, the moral sense has become atrophied by long neglect, and whole mountains of prejudice and ignorance

have to be removed before holy things can get a chance of being adequately proposed for acceptance or rejection, we can hardly dare to assert that their chance in this life (so far as we can measure such things) has been a fair one. It is not so much that they have *wilfully* resisted grace, as that their faculties for co-operating with it have been grievously impaired. They have never had any intelligent appreciation of what salvation means, nor deliberately confronted the greatest decision which the creature can ever be called upon to make in his life.

And then our thoughts travel on from these to all those others who have suffered from the unhappy way in which religion (when they have come into contact with it at all) has been presented to their view. Things may be bad enough in some quarters nowadays, but it is difficult for the men of this generation to realize the piteous condition of religion in England two centuries ago. The poor were hopelessly uneducated as a rule—unable to

read, and untrained to think ; while if they found their way to church at all, they experienced little except apathy, neglect, dreariness, and dust. There is a remarkable passage in his Essays where Newman describes only too accurately the terrible degradation of Christian worship in this country before the great Tractarian revival. "A ritual dashed upon the ground, trodden on, and broken piecemeal ; . . . heaviness, feebleness, unwieldiness, where the Catholic rites had had the lightness and airiness of a spirit ;—vestments chucked off, lights quenched, jewels stolen, the pomp and circumstance of worship annihilated ; a dreariness which could be felt, and which seemed the token of an incipient Socinianism, forcing itself upon the eye, the ear, the nostrils of the worshipper ; a smell of dust and damp, not of incense ; a sound of ministers preaching Catholic prayers, and parish clerks droning out Catholic canticles ; the royal arms for the crucifix ; huge ugly boxes of wood, sacred to preachers,

frowning on the congregation in the place of the mysterious altar ; and long cathedral aisles unused, railed off, like the tombs (as they were) of what had been and was not ; and for orthodoxy a frigid, unelastic, inconsistent, dull, helpless dogmatic, which could give no just account of itself, yet was intolerant of all teaching which contained a doctrine more or a doctrine less, and resented every attempt to give it a meaning.”¹

Or what shall we urge as an extenuating circumstance for all that countless throng who in more favoured times have never had the faith as it is in Jesus presented to them in all its attractive and convincing power? What can be said in defence of those who have been scandalized by “our unhappy divisions,” or by the inconsistent lives of professing Churchmen? What account can we give of those who have always connected religion with the soul-destroying creed of Calvin which represented God as some cruel tyrant, who deliberately relegates

¹ *Essays, Critical and Historical*, vol. ii. pp. 443, 444.

the greater part of the human race which He had made to an eternal destruction in an everlasting hell of material fire, to satisfy the requirements of some arbitrary predestinating decree? "It were better to have no opinion of God at all," said Lord Bacon, "than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely."

These are questions which we cannot answer, and where speculation is perilous. All that we can say is, that our sense of justice (which is a reflex in us of God's own essential nature) demands that every one shall have a fair trial. We are sure that no one will be rejected at the last, unless *he* has deliberately rejected God;—though how the Almighty may supply those opportunities which seem to have been lacking here, or whether He will judge them by the use they made of those they had, we have not the materials to decide. The threats of Scripture (be it remembered) are not levelled against those who have not received, or have never

had an opportunity of receiving, the Faith—but against those who have had it brought home to them in all its saving power, and have *rejected* it. “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.”¹ It is not “he that believeth not,” but “he that *disbelieveth*” (that) “shall be condemned.”² The anathemas of the Athanasian Creed are directed, not against those who do not *hold*, but against those who do not *keep* the Catholic faith.³ We cannot *keep* what we never had; and it is the sin of apostasy which Scripture threatens everywhere with such

¹ S. Matt. xi. 21, 22.

² S. Mark xvi. 16 (R.V.).

³ “The warnings of the Creed do not touch the case of the heathen, or of any who are brought up in hereditary error, but they apply only to those within the Church.”—Gibson, on the Articles, i. p. 349.

terrible retribution. "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."¹ "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."²

The one thing which seems, then, to stand out clear and unquestionable from much that we cannot know, is that God's infinite justice will secure for every one a fair chance, and that no one will ever be lost except by his own fault. "Every one," wrote Bishop Butler, "shall be *equitably* dealt with."³ "God our Saviour *willeth* that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth."⁴ Here, at

¹ Heb. vi. 4-6.

² 2 Pet. ii. 21.

³ *Analogy*, pt. ii. cap. 6.

⁴ 1 Tim. ii. 4 (R.V.).

least, we have a point on which all authorities can agree. "I heartily believe," said Dr. Pusey, "that God would not part, if He could, with one soul which He has made. Doubtless, the hour of death is an hour when God is very busy with the soul, because it is its last. When the tongue can give no utterance of its hope in Jesus; when friends have ceased to pray with it, as thinking it insensible; when human means are passed; when, perhaps, even friends have ceased to pray *for* it, as believing it to be gone; still often, while it yet lingers, God is pleading with it, and works in it what the judgment day alone will reveal."¹ And again, "We know not what God may do, in one agony of loving penitence, for one who accepts His last grace in that almost sacrament of death."² "We take good heed," says Ravignan, "never to affirm positively the reprobation of any one in particular, whatever may be his religion,

¹ *Lenten Sermons*, p. 7.

² *Eirenicon*, pt. i. p. 193.

country, period—nay, his conduct. In the soul, at the last moment of its passage on the threshold of eternity, there occur, doubtless, Divine mysteries of justice, but, above all, of mercy and of love; ‘mercy triumpheth over justice.’ We abstain from sounding indiscreetly the Divine counsels, but we know indubitably that on each occasion they are worthy of God and of His infinite goodness as well as of His justice.”¹ “The hour of death,” says Faber, “is very spacious. It gives God room. . . . Heaven draws near to it, to help as well as to behold. It is God’s last chance with His creature, and Divine wisdom must know well how to use its chances. . . . We know very little of what goes on then. The thick curtains of the glazed eye, of the expressionless or only pain-furrowed face, and of the inarticulate voice, are drawn round the last earthly audience between the Creator and the creature. . . . I

¹ Quoted in Dr. Pusey’s *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?* p. 16.

have no profession of faith to make about them [viz. those outside the Church], except that God is infinitely merciful to every soul, that no one ever has been, or ever can be, lost by surprise or trapped in his ignorance; and, as to those who may be lost, I confidently believe that our Heavenly Father threw His arms round each created spirit, and looked it full in the face with bright eyes of love, in the darkness of its mortal life, and that of its own deliberate will it would not have Him.”¹

Universalism and the Wider Hope.

Then, just once again—do we find any warrant in revelation for extending this more charitable hope so as to cover the case of those who, in spite of ample opportunities, have broken down under their probation in this life, and have died impenitent? There is certainly a kind of attractiveness about the idea of some

¹ Faber's *Creator and Creature*, pp. 324, 348.

such possible restoration—an idea which has appealed very persuasively to many minds in their rebellion against the dogmas of Calvin—and we should like to hope that there are “further purposes, undisclosed or half-disclosed, in the great order of God’s government,” as they are so pathetically expressed in those lines of the *In Memoriam*—

“Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ;

“That nothing walks with aimless feet ;
That not one life shall be destroy’d,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete.

“Behold, we know not anything ;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.”¹

And yet this is only the language of a poetic dream, while the writer himself has acknow-

¹ Lord Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, liv.

ledged the difficulty of reconciling a faith in Universalism with the facts of daily observation.

“The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul ?

“Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams ?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life ;

“That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

“I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world’s altar-stairs
That slope thro’ darkness up to God,

“I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.”¹

It would be foolish, then, to go beyond what has been revealed, and Scripture seems nowhere

¹ *In Memoriam*, lv.

to suggest that we may look for any second probation where the first has failed.

“Beyond the words of Jesus Christ and His Apostles” (they are the weighty and thoughtful words of Dean Church) “no other information is even conceivable ; and what is the natural impression derived from these words? It is, as it seems to me, that the future is viewed in immediate and exclusive relation to this life as a life of probation, a life given for obedience and duty, and inextricably connected with it. To this life succeeds judgment ; and judgment is always spoken of as if it were something complete and final. There is no perspective disclosed beyond the doom which follows it. The curtain falls ; the drama seems played out : it is as if we were to understand that all is henceforth over. We have specimens, figurative specimens doubtless, of the great process and trial, specimens of the sentence ; and the figures are taken from what is most decisive, most irrevocable, in human life. The

harvest of the world is reaped; wheat and tares are separated. . . . It is the winding-up and close of that scene of time in which we have all been so deeply interested; henceforth a new stage of existence begins, into which the consequences of this life pursue us, but of which all the conditions are absolutely beyond our comprehension. . . . We may put aside the New Testament altogether; but if we profess to be guided by it, is there anything but a 'certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation,' for obstinate, impenitent, unforgiven sin, sin without excuse and without change?"¹

The only conclusion, then, we can reach is this—that a righteous judgment involves of necessity an adequate probation. It is conceivable (though we have no grounds for saying it *will* be the case) that if through adverse circumstances, any man in this life had been deprived of such a trial, some further opportunity in the shape of probation *might* be

¹ *Human Life and its Conditions*, pp. 104-107.

granted after death. That, however, is a subject on which we have not the necessary data to speak with absolute certainty ;—but wherever the choice between good and evil has been fairly offered, and with such force and persuasion that a man might reasonably be expected to accept it, if he should deliberately resist the grace of God, the consequences of such a choice are irreparable. No new test remains in the future, no opportunity for retrieving the past awaits him hereafter, and no second probation is possible beyond the grave ;—and the door of repentance has been finally closed against him. It does not fall within our province to determine wherein an adequate probation may consist ;—since God is the only judge of such questions ; while as to every man's work, his opportunity, his capacity for choice, and his responsibility, the last Day alone will declare “of what sort it is.”

Sympathy and Severity.

There are two simple duties as concerning our own spiritual life which a conviction like this is calculated to impress upon ourselves.

1. And, first, a rigid determination to *refrain from judging other people*, and especially those whose opportunities have evidently been so far less favourable than our own. It is impossible for us to measure all that complex assortment of circumstances (often quite beyond human control) which go to determine a man's real responsibility, or to calculate the exact bearing of all those subtle forces which give a bent and direction to character either for good or ill. A decision like this can only be left in the hands of that God Who will judge each creature with unerring justice, and Whose "mercy is over all His works."¹ Possibly our own family circle may include some member about whom we feel painfully anxious ;—one, it may be, who has

¹ Ps. cxlv. 9.

lapsed from Communion, given up church, broken with religion altogether, or fallen into some grievous habit of sin. In such a case it is our duty, no doubt, to do all that we can "in season and out of season,"¹ by remonstrance or encouragement, by example and prayer;—and yet if we fail, there is no need for despair. Or, perhaps, in our work for the souls of others, we find so many who are deaf to our entreaties, and who spurn our efforts to help or advise, until we are tempted to give it all up as some hopeless task. When we have done all that lies within our power, and our efforts are apparently rewarded with failure, we must be content to leave the issue with God. At least we can be careful that our own life does not give the lie to our profession, and that our example shall manifest the unapproachable attractiveness of moral consistency;—and then we can commend them and their needs to Him Who knows them better than they know themselves, Who can

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

read the inner secrets of the heart, Who can weigh the real extent of human guilt, and Who will most assuredly reward every man according to his deserts.

2. And the other is, *severity with ourselves*. Whatever extenuating circumstances can be urged in the case of other people, we can hardly doubt that, so far as our own life is concerned, we have had a fair and adequate trial. As we look back over the past we can see our own unfaithfulness to the love which has pursued us with unwearying patience until now—all the wonderful dispensations of providence which seem almost as if they had been concentrated on our own case, and to secure our own salvation—all the warnings, opportunities, encouragements, which have been lavished on us in such rich profusion, and which even our own stubborn, incessant neglect have not tempted God to withdraw. Again and again have we proved Him to be indeed “a merciful God, full of compassion, long-suffering, and of great pity—

sparing when we deserved punishment, and in His wrath thinking upon mercy." And here we still find ourselves surrounded with privileges that we so little deserved, "in the region of light, in the home of peace, in the presence of saints, . . . in the possession of certainty, consistency, stability, on the highest and holiest subjects of human thought, to have hope here and heaven hereafter, to be on the Mount with Christ, while the poor world is guessing and quarrelling at its foot." But whatever our state may be now, we have no insurance against the awful peril of relapse. Pardoned sin does not destroy that "infection of nature,"¹ which, without grace and vigilance, is a constant source of danger to our perseverance. If we have once turned from sin to holiness, there is no reason why we should not turn again from holiness to sin. None of us can afford to ignore the possible risk of apostasy, and "at our last hour to fall away from God;"²—and we can look to no

¹ Article ix.

² Burial Office.

further probation beyond the grave. "Work out (then) your own salvation with fear and trembling,"¹ knowing that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"²—even that God Who, though His mercies are boundless, yet to impenitent sinners has revealed Himself as "a consuming fire."³

¹ Phil. ii. 12.

² Heb. x. 31.

³ Heb. xii. 29.

The Spirits in Prison

THERE is no consolation to which Christian people are found to cling more tenaciously as they approach their last agony, than to the thought that the experience they are about to face has been shared by their Redeemer before them. Jesus Christ, in condescending to become Man, freely accepted all that the surrender involved. He might conceivably have taken a human nature and have ascended with it into heaven without dying on the Cross at all, since death is the penalty of our sin in which He could have no possible share. In becoming "obedient unto death,"¹ therefore, our Saviour was deliberately accepting something which He might have declined ; whereas in espousing our cause, He

¹ Phil. ii. 8.

freely identified Himself with all which may happen to ourselves, "yet without sin."¹ We might place ourselves in imagination, then, on Calvary when the great Sacrifice had been completed, in order to learn what took place when He died, and how those mysterious hours were spent between the breathing out of His sacred life and the glorious Resurrection from the grave on Easter morning.

The Sacred Body in Joseph's Tomb.

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, then, so far as its sufferings are concerned, was for ever past and over. All that hatred; and malice, and envy, and cruelty could combine to accomplish, had been done; and now that the Immaculate Victim had breathed out His innocent life, the poor, bleeding, bruised, and mangled Body had escaped by dying beyond the reach of further outrage and indignity. The midday

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

darkness, too, has cleared away ; our Saviour's enemies are satisfied at last with the result of their completed act of vengeance ; and the Jews long since have returned to the guilt-stained city to celebrate a Passover which that day's tragedy (however little they know it) has robbed of any further significance. And so the hill of Calvary would have been deserted altogether, were it not for the little band of faithful watchers who still linger near the Cross, braving risk and danger provided only they can do what nature always bids us do in paying some last tribute of affection and respect to the bodies of our departed friends. By pious hands the holy form of our Redeemer is reverently lowered from the Tree ; it is laid once again (if tradition tells us true) on the knees of the Mother who bare it ; it is wrapped in the linen clothes with the costly unguents, which it was hoped might preserve it from corruption ; it is borne in slow procession to Joseph's garden-tomb ; it is placed on the cold slab of stone enveloped in its white funeral

shroud ; a heavy mass of rock is rolled against the mouth of the cave ;—and then, every one returns to Jerusalem for the sabbath rest, except those two faithful women who still can not tear themselves away, of whom we read, “There was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.”¹

“At length the worst is o’er, and Thou art laid
Deep in Thy darksome bed ;
All still and cold beneath yon dreary stone
Thy sacred form is gone ;
Around those lips where power and mercy hung,
The dews of death have clung ;
The dull earth o’er Thee, and Thy foes around,
Thou sleep’st a silent corse, in funeral fetters wound.”²

The Soul of Jesus in the Unseen World.

But it is to the *Soul* of Jesus Christ rather than to His *Body*, that our thoughts should be directed *now*. Our Lord was Perfect *Man* as well as Perfect God ; and when He died on

¹ S. Matt. xxvii. 61.

² *Christian Year* : “Easter Eve.”

the Cross there happened to His human nature that which will happen to each one of ourselves when we die:—His Soul was separated from the Body in death, though by virtue of the Hypostatic Union, the Godhead was still inseparably united with them both, and it was still the Body and the Soul of “Jesus Christ both God and Man.” And if we know that the *Body* of our Lord rested for three days in the tomb, we find the answer to the question as to what became of His *Soul* expressed in the Article of the Creed which asserts that “He descended into hell;”—that is, not the place of eternal torment, of course, but into Hades, or the unseen world, where the disembodied souls of men are awaiting the judgment of the Last Great Day.

Our Lord (as we saw), being sinless Himself, need never have submitted to death at all, inasmuch as death was the penalty for sin; but He made this voluntary surrender of His life as an all-sufficient Sacrifice for the sins of His

brethren whose cause He had espoused and whose guilt He condescended to bear. And in this acceptance of the penalty our Saviour claimed exemption from nothing which death involved. "He *tasted* death for every man"¹—He drank the cup of its bitterness to the very dregs—and He deliberately *willed* to face whatever experience may await ourselves, even in those mysterious realms which are peopled with departed souls. Jesus Christ, then, has not only passed through all that we shall have to face when we die, and has been (so far as His sacred flesh was concerned) the tenant of a mortal grave, but He has also gone where we must go, and has deigned to share our nature not only as living but as *dead*. And the Church, by appointing as the Epistle for Easter Eve those mysterious words of S. Peter² with reference to the action of our Lord's human Soul when it had quitted the Body, would seem to have sanctioned that spirit of

¹ Heb. ii. 9.

² 1 Pet. iii. 17-22.

reverent curiosity which prompts us to ask how that interval was employed. Did His human Soul descend into Hades only because He willed to share our experience and to die a real death? or were there other purposes beyond which are only partially disclosed, and further operations among those waiting dead which are intended to enlarge our conceptions of the far-reaching possibility of that Sacrifice wherein there "is plenteous redemption"?¹

"Sleep'st Thou indeed? or is Thy spirit fled

At large among the dead?

Whether in Eden bowers Thy welcome voice

Wake Abraham to rejoice,

Or in some drearier scene Thine eye controls

The thronging band of souls;

That, as Thy *blood* won *earth*, Thine *agony*

Might set *the shadowy realm* from sin and sorrow free."²

Such, anyhow, has been a traditional belief of the Church which it inherited from the earliest times. When the Soul of Jesus left the Body which now hung lifeless on the Cross, it was to the realms of Hades and the imprisoned dead that it made its way:—

¹ Ps. cxxx. 7. ² *Christian Year*: "Easter Eve."

“But see ! how hushed the crowd of souls !
Whence comes the light of upper day ?
What glorious Form is this that finds
Through central earth its ready way ?

“’Tis God ! ’tis Man ! the living Soul
Of Jesus, beautiful and bright,
The First-born of created things,
Flushed with a pure resplendent light.”¹

The royal banner of the Cross is there unfurled
—the message of the sacred wounds disclosed
—and the bands of the captives are burst
asunder.

“For Himself proclaims the story
Of His own Incarnate life,
And the death He died to save us,
Victor in that awful strife.

“Patriarch and Priest and Prophet
Gather round Him as He stands,
In adoring faith and gladness,
Hearing of the piercèd Hands.

“Oh, the bliss to which He calls them,
Ransom’d by His precious Blood,
From the gloomy realm of darkness
To the Paradise of God !”²

¹ Faber’s Hymns, xxx. 6, 7.

² Hymns A. & M., 122, vers. 6, 7, 8 (Abp. of York).

And this is only a poetical description of the Church's belief that the saints of the Old Covenant (who had "died in faith without receiving the promises"¹) were transported by the death of Christ from their yearning expectancy to some better rest in the mansions of God, until they should reach their full consummation and bliss on the great resurrection morning.

How wonderfully this thought seems to have been foreshadowed by Homer, as he describes the visit of Ulysses to the ghosts in Hades, that

"Unhappy race, whom endless night invades,
Clouds the dull air, and wraps them round in shades!"

But though they lie enveloped in this mysterious gloom, powerless to recall the past, and overwhelmed in the silence of despair, yet as the spectres draw nigh and drink the blood of the Sacrifice—

"The scenes of life recur, and actions past."

That is the voice of nature at its best—if it

¹ Heb. xi. 3.

be not something more than nature—or the dim twilight of some primeval tradition which lingered on as a witness to the Great Sacrifice which some day was to rescue the souls of men from spiritual darkness, and to the Blood of Jesus whose cleansing should be felt in worlds beyond our mortal ken.

This, then, was the purpose of our Saviour's visit to Hades ; and so when Dante describes the inhabitants of the Inferno, he likewise includes in these gloomy regions those who though "they sinned not," yet

"because they had not baptism
Which is the port of the Faith thou holdest ;
And if they were before Christianity,
In the right manner they adored not God ;"

but were released from their bondage by our Lord's descent into Hell.

" I was a novice in this state,
When I saw hither come a Mighty One,
With sign of victory incoronate.
Hence He drew forth the shade of the First Parent,
And that of his son Abel, and of Noah,
Of Moses the lawgiver, and the obedient

Abraham, patriarch, and David, king,
Israel with his father and his children,
And Rachel, for whose sake he did so much ;
And others many, and he made them blessed ;
And thou must know, that earlier than these
Never were any human spirits saved.”¹

Such for fifteen hundred years was a conviction graven on the heart of Christendom—expressing itself at times in strange and fantastic ways—embodied in legends, poems, pictures, dramas, sacred hymns ; and yet all intended to enshrine their belief that Christ’s redemptive purpose affected worlds beyond this visible scene of our probation, and was laden with consequences which utterly transcend the limits of our poor finite comprehension.

“ *The Gospel preached to them
that are Dead.*”

Now, the place in Scripture which beyond all others seems to lend its sanction to this idea, is that difficult passage in S. Peter where he alludes to the increased activity of our

¹ Dante, *Inferno*, iv. 35-38, 52-63.

Lord's human soul through innocent suffering as an encouragement to his converts who were enduring a persecution which they felt to be undeserved. "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God ; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit ; in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." ¹ The work of our Lord's soul, then, in that other world is referred to by the Apostle here by way of illustration ; but before dealing with the inference which he means us to draw, we should try to understand what it is precisely that S. Peter asserts.

And first it should be noticed that there is no reference here to any action of God the Holy Ghost (as our Authorized Version might seem to imply), but that a contrast is drawn between the higher and lower parts of our

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 18-20 (R.V.).

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Lord's human nature. "Being put to the death in the flesh, but quickened *in* the spirit [the Revised Version translates it]; *in* which" (viz. quickened human spirit) "also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." So far, that is, as His flesh or body, which at the Incarnation He assumed, was concerned, He was "put to death;" but as regards the higher spiritual nature which belonged to the integrity of His manhood, so far from being destroyed when it was severed from the Body, it was "*quickened*," i.e. it entered on some higher life where it acquired new powers of energy and usefulness. And then after stating this fact, the Apostle goes on to explain how this human spirit, thus "*quickened*," went where the spirits of other men go, to convey a message to the departed spirits of men who are spoken of as detained in some kind of "prison." And lastly, this visit to the souls of the dead is still further defined by what follows;—for he tells us that it was addressed to those "which aforetime were

disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water."

*The Nature of our Lord's Message
to the Spirits in Hades.*

Such, then, would seem to be the general meaning of S. Peter's words;—though the passage suggests three obvious questions which require a moment's consideration.

1. And first, who are included among these "spirits" here referred to? Does the Apostle mean to limit its application to those particular sinners who perished in the Flood? or does he regard this as a representative specimen of a mercy which may be extended to others as well? Here is a question which cannot be answered with absolute precision. Our Lord had referred in His teaching on more than one occasion to that unique and terrible judgment which had swept a whole generation into

eternity—"As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be;"¹ and S. Peter tells us here how these "spirits" when they passed from earth were detained "in prison;" which may mean, either that through all those intervening years they had been undergoing some confinement as the temporal punishment of their sin, or else that they had been kept in some place of ward where those who lived under the Old Dispensation were constrained to await the proclamation of the message of Christ's finished Sacrifice. The narrative does not tell us whether these sinners may have repented at the last, when God's outraged patience swept them from the face of the earth, or whether they remained impenitent throughout. It seems far more probable that "in the very fears and agonies of death some vital movement of the will may have taken place—some spiritual cry for mercy—some one long breath of penitence, . . . and that single flash of

¹ S. Matt. xxiv. 37.

response to grace may have made the men capable of education and discipline in that "prison" to which they were removed."¹

2. Then secondly, we should like to know, what was the *character* of this proclamation? If, indeed, the message was addressed to the "spirits" of men who died *impenitent*, we can only infer that it was a renewed offer of salvation extended to a certain group of sinners who (like Dives in the parable) were suffering in Hades. This view was certainly held by some persons in the Early Church; but though they believed that we have here an instance of some special act of favour being imparted to a limited class of sinners, they declined (as a rule) to draw the inference that similar opportunities will be granted to everybody. But the idea that any impenitent sinners were delivered from torment by our Lord's descent into Hell, has been by no means universally accepted by the Church. Many of the Fathers (in order

¹ Mason's *Faith of the Gospel*, p. 358.

to bring this incident into closer harmony with what God has revealed to us of His dealings with sinners elsewhere) believed that though these imprisoned sinners may have closed their ears to the warnings of Noah while the Ark was being prepared, yet when the Deluge actually came and fulfilled his predictions, they were brought to repentance—too late, indeed, to escape the temporal doom which their disobedience deserved, but not too late for their penitence to secure for themselves “the future possession of salvation and eternal deliverance from the consequences of unrepented sin.”

3. Then once again—why should S. Peter have singled out these particular sinners from all others as the special recipients of the Divine message which was brought by our Saviour at His death to the other world? Was it merely due to the fact that they were the first in point of time to be imprisoned, and were the first to be released? Are they

meant to serve as a typical illustration of what may happen to others in the unseen world? Or can we trace any special reasons why these ante-diluvians should have had a gracious favour extended to them which will not be shared by all men? Here surely is a case where we need the utmost caution in drawing conclusions, especially if they happen to come into dangerous collision with the general teaching of revelation on this subject. It may possibly be that S. Peter's mind almost instinctively turned to their particular case by reason of the figure of the Ark which he had used in the same sentence, where the waters of the Flood on which it floated suggested a type of Holy Baptism by which sinners safely ride "through the waves of this troublesome world" by being brought into the Ark of Christ's Church.¹ If that be so, his illustration does not provide us with any argument

¹ "The reason of mentioning here these sinners, above other sinners, appears to be their connection with the type of Baptism which follows."—Alford, *in loc.*

one way or the other as to whether these sinners died finally impenitent or repented at the last, and whether a similar privilege might be extended to others or the reverse. It is, however, far more in accordance with the general teaching of Scripture to believe that all those who depart this life leave their present state on one side or other of a line which God alone can determine—a line which separates in His sight those who are capable of being saved from those who are not. And yet, on the other hand, if revelation supplies us with very little warrant for supposing that there will be any fresh *probation* for any one beyond the veil, there is ample ground for believing that in many cases there may be added *opportunities* for those who have had few in this world, but whose precise nature we are powerless to define. Where that Divine grace, which deals in different measure with every one born into this world, has not been completely quenched; where God has not been

wilfully and finally refused ; where (for want of knowledge or other disabling circumstances) the soul has never been in a position to apprehend God in this life, or has passed away with (to us) no visible sign of penitence or faith, we may humbly trust "with this merciful record before us, that an opportunity hitherto wanting is supplied to the soul in that unseen world, and a revelation of grace, such as was not possible under the conditions and amid the hindrances of its life here."

*Suffering, the Secret of Spiritual
Enlargement.*

Such, then, appears to be the most probable meaning of a difficult passage ; but whatever obscurities may render its interpretation doubtful, there can be no question as to the kind of application which the Apostle intended, by making use of this incident, to bring home to his readers.

S. Peter had been confronted by certain

inquirers, apparently, with a question as to their Christian duty when they found themselves under the burden of suffering for righteousness' sake. The converts to whom his letter was addressed were evidently experiencing some outbreak of violent and bitter persecution which the consciousness of their own innocence made it very difficult to bear with equanimity;—and so he reminds them of the good which may always be expected to issue from such fiery trials, provided only they follow the example of Jesus Christ. So long as these sufferings (like their Master's) were undeserved there was no cause for alarm, since nothing but profit could come ultimately from their pains or martyrdom, as had proved the case with His sacred Passion. Men might do their worst in the shape of outrage and cruelty; yet if only they went to the struggle "armed with the mind of Christ,"¹ persecution could but contribute to their advancement in the end, and

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 1.

death (so far from meaning loss to themselves) would bring with it an increase of spiritual gain. And it was this last idea (viz. the gain that springs from innocent suffering) which suggested to the Apostle's mind its most conspicuous and attractive illustration in the outcome of his Master's Passion. *He* had been put to a cruel death, no doubt, so far as His human flesh was concerned; and yet inasmuch as He died, not because He deserved death, but "the righteous for the unrighteous," that death had been productive of immeasurable good not only here in this world, but also in those mysterious realms beyond. For this human "spirit" of His, when parted from the body, had forthwith been "quickenened" into some higher activity, and had acquired fresh capacities for usefulness, as it travelled forth from its tenement of clay to those unexplored regions of the dead, where it proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation to the departed souls of men who were awaiting their deliverance from the gloomy prison-house of

Ilades. And just in the same manner (the analogy would seem to suggest) these persecuted Christians whom he was seeking to encourage under their present trial, could take comfort from the thought that by patient endurance they might be able to tread in the footsteps of their Master and win new victories for Jesus Christ.

Nor was the application of the Apostle's argument by any means exhausted when the circumstances which first elicited it had passed away. All suffering, if cheerfully accepted for the Master's sake, becomes invested with some halo of more than earthly glory, inasmuch as it reflects (even if it may not be said to enshrine) the sacrificial sufferings of our Lord.¹ There are few lives (however they may choose to treat it) which sooner or later do not have to pass beneath some searching trial. Sometimes it can still take the shape of real physical pain and loss, such as the open acknowledgment of our faith

¹ Col. i. 24.

may in certain quarters be found to involve. But more frequently it assumes a less violent form in our own days when the authority of all that has weight among mankind (of rank, of wealth, of learning, of power) is on the side of Christianity, provided it does not become too aggressive or obtrude itself too offensively on the comforts and conveniences of life. When the Church (in a sense) has conquered society, when the world believes itself to be religious (however hollow and inconsistent its profession often proves), and when public opinion (with certain distinct reservations) professes to be on our side, the risk of much *outward* persecution for holding fast to our convictions is less likely to be incurred ;—but it does not follow from this that our peril is past. There are households, institutions, places of business, offices, workshops, even in Christian countries, where any open avowal of our faith in Jesus Christ is likely to be met, if not with violence, at least by the hardly less effective weapon of ridicule.

There are clubs and societies and drawing-rooms where to confess that we hold ourselves bound to obey certain rules of the Church (that we believe in fasting, that we are communicants, or go to Confession) would almost certainly provoke some expression of scorn and disdain, which is all the harder to endure just because it touches those higher and more sensitive regions of our moral nature. It is not always easy to remain unmoved by some contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, some curl of the lip, some subtle innuendo (however delicately veiled), or some ill-concealed gesture of surprise. None of us find it pleasant to face a storm of derision when our religious opinions are challenged, when fearless confession excites some outburst of ill-natured remark, or when our convictions provide material for the scoffs or the merriment of ribald companions with whom it is expedient to keep on good terms. Human nature shrinks instinctively from seeing others pass us in the competition for place or wealth, because we

have the courage to decline being party to some questionable proceeding, a dirty trick or some dishonest act. No one would *care* to throw up a situation or an opening because it happens to come into collision with those principles of truth and integrity which we have learnt in the school of Christ;—and yet that is the choice which has frequently to be made. It often requires an effort of more than ordinary bravery to admit our true principles in public, or to confess our connection with some unpopular cause;—and yet if the lesson of the Cross has come home to any purpose to our hearts, we shall have been convinced that wherever truth is to make its way in this sinful world, it must pass through the crucible of sacrifice and be stamped with the mark of that saving sign which consecrated the anguish of Calvary.

And the same principle holds good in our own personal lives. Suffering (in whatever shape it comes, and however difficult to endure),

when accepted in the spirit of Christ, means invariably some enlargement of spiritual power. No kind of pain (physical, mental, spiritual), when faithfully accepted, can fail to open out fresh avenues of sympathy and moral development. "Our Lord (it has been beautifully said), as the Man of sorrows, has shown us that pain is not to be measured by the reasons for it which we can trace in nature: it has more and larger purposes which we can only guess at; but as associated with love, with sanctity, with resignation, pain is most assuredly the harbinger of peace and joy. On the Cross its triumph was unique—it availed to take away the sins of the world. On the Cross we read two mottoes which have transfigured the world of pain—'By His stripes we are healed,' and 'If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him hereafter.'"¹

"Stay thee, sad heart, or e'er thou breathe thy plaint,
And still thee, murmuring tongue,
And mark Who climbs the hill, so meek, so faint,
Whose brows with anguish wrung

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 24; 2 Tim. ii. 12.

On the rough way drop blood ;
How rushing round Him like a flood,
They drag Him, fallen beneath the accurs'd and galling
wood :

“ Nor Him alone. They seize upon his way,
Early that fearful morn,
One hastening Zion-ward, and on him lay
Part of the pain and scorn,
Part of the Cross : who knows
Which in his secret heart he chose,
The persecutor's peace, or the meek Saviour's woes ?

“ O surely when the healing Rood he felt,
The sacrificial fire
Of love redeeming did his spirit melt,
And with true heart's desire
He set where Jesus trode
His steps along the mountain road,
Still learning more and more of His sweet awful load.”¹

It is not every one who has the opportunity afforded him of working or speaking directly for Jesus Christ ;—but there are very few of us who sooner or later are not called (like S. Peter's converts of old) to *suffer* for Him. Here, at any rate, is ready to hand a witness and a weapon in which we all can claim our

¹ *Lyra Innoc.*, v. 1.

share ; and whatever other occasions for service life may bring, we can at least follow the Apostle's advice by preserving "a good conscience ; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ ;"¹ and so we shall best tread in the footsteps of Him "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth : Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously : Who His own self bare our sins in His own Body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed."²

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 16.

² 1 Pet. ii. 22-24.

Our Relation and Duties towards the Blessed Dead

“**T**HANKS be to God for our glorious possession of the Catholic Faith, which teaches us the Communion of Saints, which gives us the help of their intercession and fellowship, which sets before us the union of the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant, and the mutual co-operation of both to bring the whole world within Christ’s kingdom! Would that all men, whatsoever they be, would ponder this truth. The mighty Church of Christ professes this as an article of faith; it is Christ’s own teaching. . . . Happy they to whom it is given to accept the true Catholic Faith in all its life and fulness! They carry heaven about within them. God is in them,

and Jesus Christ, and the souls of the blessed who rest in Him, are already their friends and companions." So wrote M. Gratry in his life of Henri Perreyve ;¹ and in his words we seem to catch some echo of S. Paul's teaching when he reminded his converts how "God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."² Our Lord, then, by His glorious resurrection from the dead and triumphal entry into heaven has not only established an universal dominion over nature and the Church, but He has now made it possible for each soul whom He died to redeem to be brought into some vital connection with His own risen humanity which is inexpressibly mysterious. The way in which we individually

¹ English Translation, pp. 199, 200.

² Eph. ii. 4-6 (R.V.).

appropriate this privilege, of course, is through the sacrament of baptism, "for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,"¹ in such a way that henceforward we can be described as "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."² But this incorporation of the individual into the glorious manhood of Jesus Christ carries with it something besides; for to be brought into this living union with *Him*, involves also some wonderful "*communion*" with all other people who (living or departed) have been admitted into the same mysterious fellowship with Him who is revealed to us as "the head of the body, the Church."³ "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."⁴ That is the real link which binds together in one both quick and dead—a link which death is powerless to break;⁵—and if the dead are living an active, conscious life, and are still bound up so intimately

¹ I Cor. xii. 13.

² Eph. v. 30.

³ Col. i. 18.

⁴ Rom. xii. 5; cf. Eph. iv. 25.

⁵ Rom. viii. 38.

with those that are left behind, it is only natural that we should like to know if there is anything *we* can do on earth to maintain, deepen, strengthen that relationship which exists between the different members of the Body of Christ, just as we are sure that *they* also have not ceased to aid with prayer and sympathy their brethren in the flesh who have still to carry on a weary warfare in this world with sin.

The Communion of Saints.

And yet this Article of our Christian faith which we call "the Communion of Saints," though we recite it so frequently in our Creed, has practically dropped out of our religious calculations as a real and living fact. When we are confronted with any theological statement of the great verity, we should at once admit it to be true ; yet it is an acknowledged fact that wherever convictions have nothing to correspond with them in our practice, they soon cease to

convey any very intelligible meaning to the mind or to have much bearing on human life and conduct. What, then, do we mean exactly when we express our belief in the "Communion of Saints"? and how ought we to manifest it in our lives?

On the day of Pentecost in the Upper Room the Holy Ghost was sent down by our Ascended Lord to accomplish that which He, so long as He dwelt visibly amongst us on earth, could not effect, in taking possession of the souls of believers and knitting them together in one. The Apostles, no doubt, while Jesus Christ was still with them in the flesh, had been formed already into some kind of visible society—a society which was afterwards to constitute the framework of the living Body that should come into existence by the quickening operation of the Spirit of God ;—but until the day of Pentecost they were merely a little brotherhood made up of separate units loosely joined together, whereas afterwards they became "parts and

organs of one unseen power ; . . . their separate persons were taken into a mysterious union with things unseen, were grafted upon and assimilated to the spiritual body of Christ, which is One, even by the Holy Ghost, in whom Christ has come again to us." ¹

The Christian Church, then, is a *living* Body, with Christ as its Head,² consisting of all those who have been consecrated in baptism, "sanctified in Christ Jesus (as S. Paul expresses it), called to be saints;" ³—separated by God's grace from this sinful world, regenerated by the Spirit, detached from the corrupt mass of humanity, and brought into vital connection with the energizing power of our Saviour's risen life and victory. That is the primary meaning of the word "saint," viz. a person consecrated or set apart. In this sense *all* baptized people are saints, and are so described frequently in the

¹ Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv. pp. 169, 170.

² Eph. i. 22 ; Col. i. 18.

³ 1 Cor. i. 2.

New Testament, however little they might seem to deserve the title ;—just as under the Old Covenant, the whole people of Israel were spoken of as “a holy nation,”¹ because they were separated from the rest of the world and dedicated to a peculiar service. The same word is also used occasionally in its later and more restricted sense of those who walked answerably to their Christian profession, and were actually holy as “He which called them is holy.”² And this Body (so constituted) embraces not only the living, but also all those who have passed away from this visible world, while those parts of it which are unseen are in close and full communion with that part which is manifested here upon earth. Some portion of this mighty company is still on its trial, struggling with evil in the world ; whereas another (and by far the larger portion as the centuries roll by) is made up of those innumerable souls who have now passed to their rest in

¹ Exod. xix. 6.

² 1 Pet. i. 15.

Christ's faith and fear, or reached their everlasting reward. In that other world, then, are the souls of the dead who have retired from this visible scene ; but by dying they neither cease to be members of the Body of Christ, nor have they lost the character of holiness they possessed upon earth ;—nay, rather, they have now acquired, or are acquiring, fresh graces and capacities for virtue, till they have reached the consummation of their perfect bliss. That is what is really meant in the New Testament when S. Paul reminds his Ephesian converts how God has “raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus ;”¹ or when the Hebrew Christians are told that this new dispensation has brought them “unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the

¹ Eph. ii. 6 (R.V.).

Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”¹ That is the august company with whom our baptismal initiation invites us to live and associate! Our “communion,” while we still linger in the flesh, is already with our great Father and Creator, since the title of “sons of God”² has been conferred on all who by their new birth have been made “partakers of the divine nature.”³ We have “communion,” likewise, with our divine Redeemer, since “our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”⁴ It brings us into living contact with the Spirit too, for it is not only “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,” but also “the communion of the Holy Ghost,”⁵ which the Apostle prays may be bestowed upon the Corinthian Church. It is a “communion” in which the holy angels are proud to share—those unfallen spirits, those bright intelligences of heaven, who find the

Heb. xii. 22, 23.³ 2 Pet. i. 4.⁴ 1 Joh. i. 3.² 1 Joh. iii. 1, 2.⁵ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

highest employment for their created activities in praising their Maker in heaven and in ministering to those who share His Incarnate nature on earth.¹ And it is a "communion" which includes the saints departed as well, whether waiting in Paradise or admitted to the very presence of God;—since death is powerless to destroy the link which binds together the soul to Jesus Christ and those who are still alive in Him. And this is the great company into whose privileges and fellowship we were admitted at the Font. For baptism does not constitute our entrance into some merely visible society which varies with the country where it is administered, but "into the one invisible company of elect souls, which is independent of time and place. . . . When a child is brought for Baptism (as it has been beautifully expressed), the Church invisible claims it, begs it of God, receives it, and extends to it, as God's instrument, her own

¹ Heb. i. 14.

sanctity. When we praise God in Holy Communion, we praise Him with the Angels and Archangels, who are the guards, and with the Saints, who are the citizens of the City of God. When we offer our Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or partake of the sacred elements so offered, we solemnly eat and drink of the powers of the world to come. . . . When we profess the Creed, it is in no self-willed, arbitrary sense, but in the presence of those innumerable Saints who well remember what its words mean, and are witnesses of it before God, in spite of the heresy or indifference of this or that day. . . . When we pray in private, we are not solitary; others 'are gathered together' with us 'in Christ's name,' though we see them not, with Christ in the midst of them. . . . When we are called to battle for the Lord, what are we who are seen, but mere outposts, the advanced guard of a mighty host, ourselves few in number and despicable, but bold beyond our numbers, because supported by chariots of fire

and horses of fire round about the Mountain of the Lord of Hosts under which we stand?"¹ That is what the Catholic Church really means!—it is nothing less than the mystical Body of Christ, and the term is meant to impress upon our minds the truth that there exists between Christ and His members a connection as close as there is between a man's body and his personal self. And when we come to realize this fact, we understand that the Church is not some earthly institution, however venerable; that it is a corporation independent of the civil power or any human patronage; that its inner life does not rest on an arm of flesh, or worldly support of any kind; that it does not derive its real force from its endowments or its distinguished ancestry, from the learning of its professors, the numbers of its adherents or the zeal of its sons;—from nothing, in fact, which is visible at all, but from its vital and

¹ Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, iv. pp. 176, 177.

indestructible connection with Jesus Christ its Lord. When, therefore, the souls of Christian people who have been thus united to the Body of Christ on earth pass into that unseen world, there is no reason to suppose that death destroys their interest in the fortunes of those they leave behind, any more than that it breaks this union between themselves and God. It has become the habit of our modern world, it is true, to talk of the dead in a pitying kind of way, as if they had entered on some half-conscious, shadowy kind of existence, which was so inferior to the state they enjoyed on earth ;—"as though *we* were in light and *they* in darkness—we in power and influence, they in weakness—we the living, they the dead ;"—whereas, if we are to believe revelation, it would appear to be precisely the reverse. "Shall we presume to compare (it has been finely expressed) that great assemblage of the elect, perfected and at rest, . . . with ourselves, poor strugglers with the flesh and the devil, who have but the

earnest not the crown of victory, whose names are not so written in the heavens, but they may be blotted out again? . . . Shall we be as infidels to suppose that the Church is only what she seems to be, a poor, helpless, despised, and human institution, scorned by the wealthy, plundered by the violent, out-reasoned by the sophist, and patronized by the great, and not rather believe that she is serving in presence of the Eternal Throne? . . . Nay, shall we not dimly recognize amid the aisles of our churches and along our cloisters, about our ancient tombs, and in ruined and desolate places, which once were held sacred, not in cold poetic fancy, but by the eye of faith,—the spirits of our fathers and brethren of every time, past and present, whose works have long been ‘known’ to God? . . . Can all the efforts of the children of men, their accurate delineations of our outward form, their measurement of our visible territory, their summing-up of our substance, their impairing of our civil rights, their numbering of our

supporters, circumscribe the City of the Living God, or localize the site of Eden, and the Mountain of the Saints.”¹

Such, therefore, is the tremendous inheritance in which we profess our belief, whenever we acknowledge our faith in the “Communion of Saints.” And yet somehow we have ceased to *realize* what it all means and involves; it has come to be a kind of intellectual assent to a theological proposition, and nothing besides; and it lives on to remind us that there were other days, now past and gone, when men’s minds and thoughts and devotions moved along very different grooves from our own. Is it possible, then, to transfigure once again this lost article of our Creed into a living and active reality? The Church suggests three very special ways amongst others by which this conviction may be recovered and secured.

¹ Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, iv. pp. 179, 180.

*The Duty and Privilege of praying
for Departed Souls.*

And first, the souls of the departed should find a constant and more regular place in our prayers. It is a little difficult quite to appreciate the prejudice which undoubtedly is felt in certain quarters against praying for the dead. Death closes each man's probation, it is true ; but that need not imply that God has no further gracious dealings with the soul beyond the grave, in which the living are permitted to have the privilege of some co-operation. Scripture, indeed, knows nothing of any artificial boundary between the living and the departed, knit together as they are in the one Body of Jesus Christ, who has told us that God "is not a God of the dead, but of the living : for all live unto Him ;"¹ and consequently when people die the only change we need make in our prayers is to adapt them to the circumstances of those who are no

¹ S. Luc. xx. 38.

longer on their trial, but translated into fresh surroundings where our sympathy can follow them. The practice of prayer for the departed, moreover, so far from being merely dependent on the fact that it is the expression of a deep natural instinct which declines to be suppressed, constitutes also one of the best attested doctrines of the primitive Church. There is no single passage which can be quoted from Scripture where it is ever implied that we must cease to intercede for those who have "departed this life in God's faith and fear." Though the Jews of our Lord's day always included the dead in their prayers, we can find no single word which fell from His sacred lips that can be distorted into signifying His dissent or disapproval. In the Apostolic age it appears to have been universally assumed to be legitimate, and when S. Paul prays with reference to Onesiphorus that "the Lord will grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day,"¹ no unbiassed

¹ 2 Tim. i. 18 (cf. *v.* 16).

interpreter, taking the context into consideration, could doubt that it was a prayer for one who was *dead*. And so too when we pass from the sacred Canon, we find that "at what is practically the opening of Christian literature, in the age of Tertullian, the evidence for prayers for the dead, as an immemorial though uncommanded custom of the Church, is ample and not contested."¹ The Catacombs furnish us with abundant and overwhelming evidence in the same direction; all the early Liturgies embody such petitions in their prayers; the Fathers without exception regard them as part of the primitive tradition; and, in fact, it never

¹ Mason's *Purgatory, etc.*, p. 61; cf. also, "Probably no well-informed person doubts that prayers for the dead, and in particular prayers at the Eucharistic Sacrifice, are as ancient as Christianity itself, and have as complete a sanction as the universal custom of the Church can give" (*ibid.*, p. 59).

"The uniform practice of the earliest ages of the Church, as testified by the Liturgies, was the commendation of the Faithful Departed to God, for an increase of their rest and peace."—Mr. Gladstone's *Testimony to the Catholic Faith*, p. 13.

seems to have occurred to any one (except the heretic Aerius¹) that prayers might be made for our friends only in this life, and not when perhaps the love which joins us together had become deeper than ever before. With these facts before us we may well question the wisdom of our Reformers in removing all mention of the dead from the Public Offices of the Church²—(a course, apparently, which they considered to be justifiable owing to the prevalence of superstitions that clustered round the dead);—though here, as on other kindred subjects, there is ample evidence to show that though the doctrine itself,

¹ Epiphanius, *Haer.* 75.

² “Would to God, that the Church of England, which certainly in other respects deserves a singular praise, on account of the great moderation she has shown in many other things, perchance not of equal moment, had in this matter and in a few others rather conformed herself to the most ancient custom of the universal Church than on account of the errors and abuses which little, by little crept in afterwards, absolutely to have rejected and entirely to have abolished it, to the great scandal of almost all other Christians.”—“*Consid. Modestæ*,” vol. ii. p. 97.

and the practice connected with it, was *obscured*, yet nothing was done in the direction of its denial or prohibition. It is much to be deplored, and a great amount of evil can be traced to the fact, that for three centuries we have been precluded from all direct mention of the needs of our departed friends in our public worship; yet the lives and practice of many of our greatest Bishops and Divines combine to show us what they thought of this subject themselves, and how (in their private devotions, at any rate) this primitive custom had been duly welcomed and observed.¹

“There are, who love upon their knees
To linger when their prayers are said,
And lengthen out their Litanies
In duteous care for quick and dead.”²

It wants proving—and the burden of proof lies

Cf. *Christian Doctrine of Prayer for the Departed*, by the Rev. F. G. Lee, pp. 157–177;—(a catena which includes such names as Andrewes, Overall, Cosin, Buckeridge, Thorndike, Jeremy Taylor, Thomas Ken, Beveridge, Wilson). Cf. also Abp. Benson’s *Private Prayers*, pp. 227, 228.

² *Lyra Innocentium*: “To all friendly readers.”

with those who reject rather than with those who maintain a practice which can claim the sanction of unbroken Catholic tradition—why we may plead for other people as earnestly as we will, so long as they are here, and then just at that time of all other times when they are most in our thoughts, our lips should be sealed about their needs for ever. No one ever thought of not praying for the departed until comparatively recent times, and it is a cruel injustice to mourners that they should be forbidden to relieve their sorrow by prayer unless we are quite sure that God has forbidden them to do so. May not this silence be traced rather to those hopelessly false conceptions about the dead which have become so common in modern times? To many minds there is an almost hopeless ring about the very phrase “prayers for the dead” which seems to carry its own refutation. The world speaks of the dead in terms of condescending pity, and plays its funeral march over those who (for all we know) may have far more cause to be

playing theirs over us. We describe them as unfortunate, or poor—whereas if we only tried to realize more completely what they *are*, we could hardly speak of them in such disparaging terms. It is *we* who are “poor”—*we* who have still to fight and struggle with sin—not those whose probation is over, who are passing to some higher life, or are resting in Paradise beneath God’s tender care.

“There is no Death ! what seems so is transition ;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
Whose portal we call Death.”¹

Life within the veil after all is the true life, and not this preliminary existence which belongs to those who are still on their trial ; and the Church, when it bids us pray for the departed, in reality does not teach us to pray for the *dead* at all, but for those who have begun to live their true life and to be more gloriously alive than ever before. They are now—

¹ Longfellow’s *Resignation*.

“No part of this half-dead, half-dying world,
But to the region of the *living* gone
To pray for us, and to be reached by prayer.”¹

Perhaps our spiritual focus in this matter requires some correction, and we need to train ourselves to look upon the dead as having entered on some more glorious form of existence, and as going on “from strength to strength, until every one of them appeareth before the God of gods in Sion.”²

“In that great cloister’s stillness and seclusion,
By guardian angels led,
Safe from temptation, safe from sin’s pollution,
They *live*, whom we call dead.”³

And yet this does not alter the fact that the departed can be helped by our prayers. They have not yet reached their final beatitude—every stain must be removed before they could be happy in that place where “there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth”⁴—there is a progress going on in the soul till they have gained their perfect consummation and

¹ Faber.

² Ps. lxxxiv. 7.

³ Longfellow’s *Resignation*.

⁴ Rev. xxi. 27.

bliss—they are still awaiting their full reward ; and though we cannot be said to know very much of their actual needs, yet the Church has taught us to pray that “light, rest, peace, and speedy purification from stain of sin” may be granted to all those who still belong with us to the one family of Christ.

It might help us to realize our union with the dead if we were to draw up for ourselves a list of those departed souls who seem to have any special claim on our prayers ;—our parents, brethren, relatives, schoolfellows, friends—those who have ministered to us in holy things, helped us by their teaching and example, or have done us any good—those who have injured us, whom we have wronged, or led into any sin. We live in an age of anniversaries, centenaries, monuments, memorials—many of them of very questionable value at the best ;—but to keep the *real* birthdays of our dear ones as they passed “*ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*,” from this world of

shadows to that new and higher life within the veil, by some special commemoration at the throne of grace, could be attended by nothing but advantage to those who offer and those who receive them. To *them*, for it may mean another step onward in their progress towards the fulfilment of their heart's desire ; and to *us*, for it will serve to deepen our sense of nearness to the blessed dead, it will help us to sit more lightly to the perishing things of this fleeting world, and it will remind us of our share in that "communion" which binds together all souls (both living and departed) in the one Mystical Body of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*The Value of Saintly Intercession
within the Veil.*

Then, secondly, we should learn to value more highly than we generally do those prayers which we have every reason to believe that the saints are offering for us within the veil. It was a heathen philosopher who pointed out

that "to affirm that the dead take no thought for the good of the living is a disparagement of the laws of that friendship which, in their state of separation, they cannot be tempted to break off;"¹ and our Christian instinct assures us on higher grounds that those members of Christ's Body who have found *their* life can hardly feel indifference as to whether we are now finding *ours*.

"I still am near ;—
 Watching the smiles I prized on earth,
 Your converse mild, your blameless mirth ;
 Now too I hear,
 Of whisper'd sounds the tale complete,
 Low prayers, and musings sweet."²

It would not be possible in the present connection to discuss at length that difficult and interesting question as to the precise form in which this feeling should find its expression ;³—that is, whether it is the safer and more primitive way to address our petitions to *God* that the prayers of the saints may avail for us, or whether we

¹ Aristotle.

² *Lyra Apostolica*, liii.

³ Cf. *infra*, pp. 243 ff.

may ask the saints themselves by *direct* invocation to intercede with their Maker on our behalf. It is generally admitted by all competent authorities that by the end of the fourth century the latter form had become universal, while it has been thought that in all probability the clause wherein we express our belief in "the Communion of Saints" was added to the Creed, not only to cover this practice, but also to emphasize the sense of fellowship which those in the Church have with one another and with their brethren who have passed before them into the unseen world. It does not seem likely that a custom which had become by that time so prevalent and popular in all parts of the Church, should have sprung into such sudden existence; and so we may assume that it developed gradually from some earlier days as the natural expression of a human instinct. In later times, no doubt, it became encrusted with some grave abuses that seem to involve an infringement of the Divine prerogatives—(abuses

which are still not unknown, it is to be feared, in certain parts of Christendom)—and from asking the saints for their prayers it was an easy step to pass on to asking them for other sorts of aid ;—and yet here, as in so many other cases, misuse does not affect either its truth or legitimacy. In the upheaval of the Reformation period all reference to this practice, together with prayers for the dead, was expunged from our formularies and the custom was discouraged ;—and possibly the responsible rulers of the Church may have been justified, owing to the difficult circumstances of their times, in abolishing from public worship a custom which had become identified with so many misleading associations ;—but it would be difficult, on the other hand, to point to any really authoritative document where the practice has been condemned, and there would appear to be nothing which need hinder any loyal Churchman from addressing a direct request to the saints for their prayers, if he should feel constrained to do so. In what

way, if at all, the saints are made cognizant of such petitions, it is almost futile to inquire. If modern science has helped us to realize the presence of unsuspected mysteries and inexplicable phenomena in nature which would utterly have transcended the wildest hopes and speculations of former generations, we should do well to pause in our judgment and to be suspicious of any efforts which seek to impose some quite arbitrary restrictions on the possibilities of our connection with the higher spiritual world. Of the mode of existence which determines the conditions of that other life we are so completely ignorant, that it would be temerity itself to prescribe the laws which govern the limitation or extension of its faculties and powers. Spirit (as we know) even in this world acts mysteriously on spirit in a way we can neither fathom nor understand. There are subtle forces of communication between the souls of men here in this life—waves of thought, feeling, sympathy, flashed (as it were) by some wireless telegraphy

—which defy the impotent guesses of human definition and analysis.

“Star to star vibrates light : may soul to soul
Strike through a finer element of her own ? ”¹

What folly it seems, then, to embark on the enterprise of discovering what possible restrictions may be conceived of by the human intellect as governing life in these higher realms of existence ! Our observation informs us how every creature that is placed in this world (be it insect, bird, beast, or man) has been endowed by its Maker with an outfit of bodily organs and senses which are adapted for the fulfilment of its appointed end, and appropriate to its present mode of existence ;—but when we are dealing with that other world, we have not the same information to guide us, so that it becomes futile to dogmatize on the faculties of spirits together with the laws which may determine their range and govern their exercise. Suffice it to add that the great Fathers of the Church

¹ Tennyson's *Aylmer's Field*.

appear to have assumed that the saints were in some wonderful way made conscious of their brethren's prayers, but without formulating any theory as to how (or how far) their enlightened vision might scan the universe, or might hear its articulated cries which could only reach them through avenues which outstrip our present comprehension.

And if the saints *can* hear us, it is only natural that we should wish them to do so. If "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,"¹ it seems to follow that the holiness of the saints and their nearness to God must invest their petitions with a value which is lacking to our own. Those who are closest to Jesus Christ will have a power in intercession which is not shared by all; and consequently the holiest saints, by their very sanctity and the earnestness of their prayers, will gain the most.

This would seem to be the kind of idea which underlies those lines in the *Golden Legend*

¹ S. James v. 16.

which Longfellow puts into the mouth of Prince Henry—

“ And even as children, who have much offended
A too indulgent father, in great shame,
Penitent, and yet not daring unattended
To go into his presence, at the gate
Speak with their sister, and confiding wait
Till she goes in before and intercedes ;
So men, repenting of their evil deeds,
And yet not venturing rashly to draw near
With their requests an angry father’s ear,
Offer to her their prayers and their confession,
And she for them in heaven makes intercession.”

And the same feeling is expressed in another passage which comes home to us not only with the authority of its own persuasive beauty, but also with all that belongs to the loyal obedience and pious devotion of John Keble’s saintly example—

“ How, but in love on thine own days,
Thou blissful one, upon thee gaze ?
Nay every day, each suppliant hour,
Whene’er we kneel in aisle or bower,
Thy glories we may greet unblamed,
Nor shun the lay by seraphs framed,
‘ Hail, Mary, full of grace ! ’ O, welcome sweet,
Which daily in all lands all saints repeat !

.

“Therefore, as kneeling day by day
We to our Father duteous pray,
So unforbidden may we speak
An Ave to Christ’s Mother meek.
(As children with ‘good morrow’ come
To elders in some happy home :)
Inviting so the saintly host above
With our unworthiness to pray in love.”¹

*Eucharistic Fellowship
with the Faithful Departed.*

Then, lastly, we ought to remember also the bond of *Eucharistic fellowship* which unites the Church Militant with the Saints at rest. “The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne” (S. John tells us) “shall feed them ;”² and the vision which he saw opens to us a glimpse of that unseen world where the souls of the departed are being brought into some closer union with their Lord. And all the surroundings of the scene are *Eucharistic*. The adorable sacrifice of the Cross which we plead

¹ *Lyra Innocentium* (Methuen’s ed.), pp. 311 ff.; cf. Coleridge’s *Memoir of the Rev. John Keble*, pp. 316-320.

² Rev. vii. 17.

continually on earth, is manifesting its virtue likewise in that spiritual world. The song of the Redeemed within the veil is still a song of the Passion, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."¹ It is not the Altar on earth alone which commemorates the all-prevailing virtues of the atoning Blood; for the same Victim is the central object of adoration for the Church at rest and triumphant in heaven, as the same chant rings through the courts of Paradise, and as saints and angels and all redeemed creation take up the chorus of that everlasting hymn. And if Jesus prepares a table in the wilderness furnished with bread from heaven,² so He prepares one also within the veil, where in some mysterious way He feeds *them* also with the treasures of His redeeming love. "The Lamb," and it is the language of sacrifice, "shall feed them." How

¹ Rev. v. 12.

² Ps. lxxviii. 19, 26.

this can be is a mystery which we cannot explain ; but we know that "He who feeds the soul here on earth with the spiritual food of His most precious Body and Blood and assimilates it to Himself, carries on the process there ;—no more, indeed, sacramentally, but by direct communications of Himself." If our Communion, therefore, brings us (as we know it does) into a contact so close and inexpressible with our Lord, it is helpful to remember how it also links us on (in the highest way we can imagine here) to the souls in Paradise, to the whole Body of Christ, and to the ceaseless adoration of heaven.¹

And these are thoughts, surely (once so

¹ "I often and often believe in their presence, oversight and real (though suspended as far as perception goes) ministry of love for us, but I do not think we can say we *know* anything on this subject ; we may let our mind range on freely here, only *in the Lord* we are surest of drawing near to them, when we draw nearest to Him. *Specially at Holy Communion, it always seems to me, we are very close together, for that brings Him with His Saints, so nigh to us.*"—*Life of Bp. Wilberforce*, ii. 455.

familiar), with which we can hardly afford to dispense at the present day. "The Communion of Saints," when realized as a living fact, becomes the joy, the glory, the hope, the strength of the Catholic Church, since we are all so indissolubly bound up in the Body of Jesus Christ in one great family, that what belongs to one member belongs to the whole. The merits of our adorable Saviour; the courage of the Martyrs; the patience of Confessors; the purity of holy Virgins; the learning of Doctors; the humility, faith, devotion, charity, perseverance of the Saints—it all belongs to us as some sacred heritage in which the whole Church has its share. Just as the blood circulates through each organ of the human frame, and makes it live, so it is with the mystical Body of our Lord. Our prayers, our hopes, our joys, our sorrows, our triumphs, our failures, are not altogether our own, for they send a kind of sympathetic thrill through the whole. "Whether one member suffer, all the members

suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”¹ But this is just what (to our infinite loss) we seem to have forgotten in this materialistic age, while the “Communion of Saints” still holds its ancient position as an Article in our Creed as a beautiful though forgotten dream, as the mere echo of some voice we have ceased to recognize, or to serve as the witness of convictions which at one time meant so much but have now been well-nigh lost.² We have

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

² “Yes, indeed, this is what we need to realize and believe more fully, that the dead are with us yet. But for the most part men will not think of the dead, or dwell with them; grovelling in that which is visible, they live in a dull forgetfulness of those they have ceased to behold. Happy they who cling to the invisible, who cherish and live in the memory of those whom they no longer see! May we but be worthy to feel their nearness in our hearts!

“Men feel that all cannot be at an end between us and those who have passed out of sight, and hence the childish inventions of spirit-rapping and the like. But there is something better than this: our links to the spiritual world though unseen are powerful, and our longings, our hopes of communion with the departed, will never cease.”
—*Life of Henri Perreyve*, pp. 197, 198.

come to look upon the saints almost as some shadowy unrealities who lived very long ago, as mere characters of history which belong to the distant past, or legendary persons to whom we may owe some little debt of gratitude as benefactors of the human race, and founders of religious institutions whose advantages we enjoy. We regard them as rather antiquated people, somewhat eccentric in their behaviour, and who would have had but little sympathy with our modern ways of thought ; they have become to us little more than mere names which live on in some forgotten corner of the Calendar to mark a fair or village festival ; they are connected somehow in our minds with figures in stained-glass windows, whose very existence is rather problematical ;—and so we dismiss them from our thoughts as a subject more suited to the critical skill of the learned, the fanciful imagination of the mediævalist, or the dabbler in antiquarian research, than to the serious consideration of

those who have a great deal to do with the practical concerns of our everyday life. And yet there were times in England, not so very long ago, when the saints occupied a very different position in the popular mind ;—when men delighted to erect some costly shrine to the glory of their Creator over the scene which marked their passion and triumph (a S. Alban or a S. Edmund) to perpetuate their memory, their example, their name, or wonder-working power ;—when a picturesque and pathetic legend would gather round the wells and trees and dales and woods where holy men had lived and taught ;—when Calvary, and wayside chapel, and market-cross (the emblem at once of suffering and salvation) would point the traveller along the pathway of human life to the true goal of his existence ;—and when a pilgrimage to some distant shrine was regarded as the natural and most appropriate expression of devotion for those who realized their great inheritance, or would claim a place

in the saint's prevailing prayer. With history behind us we cannot ignore some grave abuses which were associated with these ideas, or deny that in some cases the saints may have usurped a position in popular thought and affection which should be regarded as the exclusive prerogative of the Most Holy ;—but now that this spirit has been condemned by a sceptical generation as prosaic and out-of-date, are we quite sure that anything has been done to compensate for any losses that in the process may have been sustained? Whatever wrong and foolish associations may have gathered round the tribute of honour and respect that was paid to their memory, at least it served to embody and enshrine a great fact of our holy religion which we cannot afford so lightly to dispense with and dismiss. If *they* found the saints everywhere, *we* seem to find them nowhere; and that world beyond the grave has been transformed for us again into some dark mysterious realm “where all things are

forgotten,"¹ which they had learnt to look upon as a place with which they were already familiar, and whose blessed inhabitants they counted as their dearest friends. It is worth our while, then (depend upon it), to take some trouble about realizing that death makes no real break in life—that we are not truly separated from our departed friends and relations, because we can no longer see them—that we all belong to the one family and household of God—that Jesus Christ is our Elder Brother Who has made our nature His own—that both saints and angels are our kindest and most faithful friends—that the Church is that sacred home where we can live in the sunshine of the Father's love, Whom we adore—that even now we are "the Sons of God," and though "it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."²

¹ Ps. lxxxviii. 12.

² 1 S. Joh. iii. 2.

“Invocation of Saints”

A SUFFICIENT time might seem to have now elapsed since the commencement of the great Oxford Revival for us to be in a position not only to measure approximately the results of that remarkable Movement, but also to appreciate some of the more conspicuous features which appear to have characterized this great epoch in our ecclesiastical history. That a great deal has been already accomplished no careful observer can possibly fail to notice, and that a real change has passed over the Church in England during the last seventy years (however we may care to explain it) constitute obvious facts which neither friend nor foe would wish to dispute. Both doctrines and practices which (though never repudiated

at the Reformation) had become practically forgotten, have been gradually restored, and have slowly won their way back to general acceptance. The beauty of Divine worship, reverence in our approach to God, care for the outward fabric of the sanctuary, sacramental teaching, and much besides, have painfully and after much opposition been rescued from oblivion, and reinstated (to some extent, at least) in their ancient and rightful position. These are facts which hardly admit of contradiction;—and yet as we look back through this vista of years, the point which strikes us most forcibly (perhaps) is the strange and unreasonable prejudice, together with the feeling of suspicion and hostility, which were aroused in the popular mind, as each detail of our recovered inheritance had successively to run the gauntlet of shameless misrepresentation and ignorant fanaticism before it could even meet with any measure of toleration. Surpliced choirs, the Eastward position, choral Eucharists, the mixed chalice,

altar lights, vestments, the revival of the Religious Life, baptismal grace, the Real Presence, the system of the Confessional—all in their turn have had to encounter some storm of denunciation, and their advocates to endure the charge of unpardonable disloyalty;—whereas afterwards, not only have their legitimacy been established, but they have become very generally acknowledged as parts of our great Catholic heritage, which (provided we go no further) we may safely be left to enjoy. So far as religious matters indeed are concerned, it might appear to have become almost a fixed habit of our national character (in some quarters, at any rate) to describe everything we do not happen to understand as *Popish*, and to keep some receptacle in our minds for all that is not familiar, which we label as *Roman*. Remembering, therefore, this popular tendency, possibly it may be wise to examine a little more carefully than we generally do, such controversial questions as may happen

from time to time to arise, and see what can be said in favour of any venerable customs of antiquity that may have been discarded, before we condemn them unheard. And "Invocation of Saints," to which attention has recently been directed by our Church troubles, seems pre-eminently a subject to which these remarks might apply. When the question is brought forward periodically into the arena of debate, it is usually treated as if it were a matter which carried with it its own refutation and which it were impossible to defend; but before we condemn a practice which can claim so much ancient approval, and which is universal in all other parts of Christendom, it might be well to ascertain for ourselves on what basis in Catholic antiquity it rests, and whether it may not form a subject which demands more patient and dispassionate investigation than at the hands of English Churchmen it generally receives. Certainly the correspondence columns in the secular press, and even in our religious

newspapers, are hardly reassuring when they invite public discussion on questions like these. The sense, for example, in which such words as "invocation," "prayer," "worship" are to be understood in this connection, require very careful definition before they are ready to be bandied to and fro in argument; while the real meaning of patristic quotation needs to be honestly weighed, both with reference to its context and other more lucid statements of the same writer, before it can be fairly employed as a controversial weapon on either side. But these conditions have often been lamentably ignored in the present connection, and consequently the issue has become painfully obscured; while, to make matters worse, such rash and unguarded assertions have been made on both sides from press and pulpit, in defiance of history and Catholic theology, that it has become necessary to clear our mind from the preconceptions of prejudice before we can hope to arrive at the truth. Since the Church

of England in all matters like these points us back to primitive antiquity for guidance, it becomes our duty to inquire what was the general feeling of Christians in those days, to face facts as we find them, and then make up our minds fearlessly as to what is the right attitude to assume towards a subject where our *practice* since the Reformation has certainly been at variance with the remainder of Catholic Christendom, both East and West, for some fifteen hundred years.

The Saints engaged in Intercession.

Now, by the phrase "Invocation of Saints" the Church means the custom of seeking the prayers of the saints by the use of words *directly*¹ addressed to them ;—and here two questions are involved.

¹ The practice of what is generally called "comprecation," or "indirect" invocation, where the prayer is not addressed to the saints but to God, that He will direct them to pray for us, is not considered here, because it is allowed even by the most anti-Roman writers that this method cannot be censured.

1. Do Scripture and the Primitive Church warrant us in a belief that the saints are engaged in intercession ?

2. And if so, has the Church thought it right and possible that we can ask them to help us by their prayers ?

As to the answer which must be made to the former of these two questions, there can be no possible doubt. The evidence, in fact, is so overwhelming that no body of Christians who believe that the departed souls of men preserve a conscious existence in the intermediate state, have ever seriously denied that the saints are so engaged. It has always been assumed that to retain consciousness is to retain the power of prayer ; while it would be almost inconceivable that those who had learnt in this life to find the highest exercise for their spiritual activities in prayer, should so soon as they pass through the gates of death be no longer able to pray. Though Scripture draws a veil over the details of that life beyond

the grave, yet the passages¹ which deal with the subject at all are amply sufficient to justify a conviction which has been constantly maintained by all the best theologians, who are only repeating the unanimous testimony of the early Fathers.² To take one illustration, and that the earliest:—we have an account written by the companions of Ignatius, who accompanied him on his journey and had witnessed his martyrdom. At the close of their narrative they describe a vision which had been vouchsafed them on the night following his death, in these words. “And being the night following, watching, with tears, in the house, praying to God with our bended knees, that He would give us, weak men, some assurance of what had been before done,—it happened, that falling

¹ *E.g.* Eph. ii. 19; Heb. xii. 1, 22, 23; Rev. v. 6-8; viii. 3, 4.

² The patristic testimony for this has, among other places, been put together in Luckock's *After Death*, pp. 156-173; and in Forbes's “*Considerationes Modestæ*” (Libr. Anglo-Cath. Theol.), vol. ii. pp. 157 ff.

into a slumber, some of us, on the sudden, saw the blessed Ignatius standing by us and embracing us; others beheld the blessed martyr praying for us; others, as it were, dropping with sweat, as if he were just come from his great labour, and standing by the Lord."¹ It is hardly necessary, however, to labour a point which is not likely to be seriously questioned;—so we may pass on to the second inquiry which confronts us with some much graver difficulties.

*The Evidence for Invocation of Saints
in Early Ages.*

Did the Early Church think it right to address words of petition to the saints departed for their prayers?

¹ *A relation of the Martyrdom of Ignatius*, § 13. The genuineness of the document, however, has been questioned and rejected by Bishop Lightfoot on both external and internal evidence, though he thinks it probable that the martyrologist has used an account really written by the saint's contemporaries, and added fictitious details of his own.

It would be admitted on all hands (I believe) that there is practically no evidence for or against the practice in Holy Scripture, or in Christian writings of the first two centuries. The literature of this period, however, is too scanty to lay much stress on its silence; and possibly while idolatry was rife, a special danger might exist in any development of a cultus of the saints—a danger which would have passed away, as soon as heathenism had been finally overthrown. Anyhow, although we have no evidence for its existence, we have no proof that it was unknown in those early times or repudiated.

In all probability “invocation” originated in those requests that were so often made to a martyr on his way to suffering, that he would remember and pray for his suppliant when he had attained his crown. “Thus S. Cyprian writes to ask some confessors for their prayers when, after their martyrdom, they have passed into God’s presence. And Eusebius thus

accounts for a certain holy virgin, Theodosia, exposing herself to danger by saluting certain confessors at the judgment-seat ; he supposes she did so to entreat them to remember her when they should come before the Lord. And he relates how another virgin-martyr, having experienced kindness from Basilides, one of her guards, promised him that after her death she would ask God that he might be rewarded ; and that shortly after Basilides proclaimed himself a Christian, alleging, as the reason, some vision which he had of the martyr on the third night after her death."¹ It was only a natural extension of the same idea, to continue a similar request at a martyr's tomb or on the anniversary of his triumph, since, so far from being regarded as dead, the early Christians conceived of him as having entered on some larger, fuller life, and as being more closely united to them in the Body of Christ than before. .

¹ Walker's *Devotions on the Communion of Saints*, pp. 23-25.

The first mention which can be claimed for *direct* invocation is to be found in the third century in the works of Origen;¹—but as it is not quite certain if he is speaking there of living or departed saints, it cannot be positively referred to by way of evidence;²—though Dr. Bigg does not hesitate to assert that “Origen, no doubt, regarded this kind of prayer as lawfully offered to saints, whether on earth or in heaven.”³ With this doubtful exception, therefore, we can point to nothing in Ante-Nicene literature in justification of the practice.

As soon, however, as we get into the fourth century the whole aspect of things is changed;—the age (be it remembered) of the Œcumenical Councils to which we so constantly appeal—the age of the great Fathers who fought so persistently against theological novelty in their

¹ *De Oratione*, cap. 14.

² See Mason's *Purgatory*, etc., p. 116 (note); Luckock's *After Death*, pp. 187, 188.

³ *Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, p. 185 (note).

battle for the Catholic faith;—and yet who, beyond reasonable doubt, practised invocation themselves, and taught it as an ordinary feature of Christian devotion.

As it would be impossible within our present limits to bring forward any catena of patristic authorities, it might be satisfactory to quote the conclusions of four writers who have carefully examined the evidence, and as they are all theologians of repute who do not accept the inference that Invocation is legitimate, their testimony is the more likely to be regarded as above suspicion.

1. The first is Canon Mason, who says, “It is not until the latter part of the fourth century that the practice is clearly observed. Then, all of a sudden, it is unquestioned and unquestionable.”¹

2. The second is Bishop Harold Browne, who, though he seems to manipulate his authorities with a remarkable dexterity, is

¹ *Purgatory*, pp. 118, 119.

constrained to allow that "S. Jerome . . . gave too much encouragement to the superstitions, which were taking root in his day"¹—among which he includes the practice of Invocation.

3. The third is Dr. Gibson, who asserts² that "it cannot be denied that by the time of Augustine the practice of directly invoking the saints was firmly established *as a popular one*, though even so there is no trace of such invocations being admitted into the formal services of the Church."

4. And the fourth is Dean Luckock, who has carefully sifted the main passages quoted in its favour in the second part of his book *After Death*, with the following results.³ As to S. Basil, he admits "there can be no question that he regarded the practice as legitimate, and did not hesitate to adopt it himself, and encourage others to do the same." He

¹ Bp. Harold Browne on Thirty-nine Articles, p. 516 (11th ed.).

² Thirty-nine Articles, vol. ii. p. 566.

³ *After Death*, pp. 174-197.

concludes that S. Gregory Nazianzen, S. Gregory of Nyssa, and S. Ephraem Syrus "must be ranked among its advocates." The force of the evidence of S. Chrysostom he attempts to weaken—but somewhat unsuccessfully it would seem, when it is remembered that in one passage he can say, "let us flee to the intercessions of the saints, and let us beseech them to pray for us"¹—while in places where he appears to speak less decidedly, he was obviously anxious that a practice which by this time had received such general sanction should not be allowed to encroach on those unique prerogatives which belong to the mediation of Jesus Christ.² S. Ambrose (he thinks)

¹ *In Genes.*, Hom. xlv. 2.

² The passage so often quoted from the Homily on the Canaanite woman does not really contradict the testimony which he elsewhere gives in the contrary direction. "Note the wisdom of this woman! she went not to men who promised fair, she sought not useless bandages, but leaving all devilish charms, she came to the Lord. She asked not James, she did not pray John, or apply to Peter, but putting herself under the protection of penitence, she ran alone to the Lord"—Hom. in quædam loca

"could not have formed any settled and deliberate judgment upon it;" but he considers that the testimony of S. Augustine "remains unshaken;"¹—while he adds that "we

xlvi. (Catena Aurea)—viz. she does not go to them in such a way as to rest finally on them alone—for the passage must be so interpreted, since she had apparently been importunate with the disciples also (S. Matt. xv. 23). It is always somewhat precarious to press the language of a writer, unless we are quite sure that he contemplates its bearing on subjects other than the one with which he is immediately dealing; nor must we look for the same precision of expression in cases where other truths are under consideration. Cf. also on the subject of Invocation in the writings of the Fathers, S. Chrys. *Homilies on the Statues* (Library of Fathers), note on pp. 134, 135.

¹ Some words of S. Augustine have been understood as forbidding all invocation, viz. in the *De Civitate Dei*, xxii. 10: "We build our martyrs no temples, but only erect them monuments, as in memory of men departed, whose spirits are at rest in God. We erect no altars to sacrifice to them; we offer only to Him Who is both their God and ours, at which offering those conquerors of the world, as men of God, have each one his peculiar commemoration, but are not, however, invoked by the priest who offers the sacrifice." At the Mass, however, sacrifice is offered to God, and invocations are made to *Him alone*, as the third Council of Carthage enacted (Canon 22), "when the priest stood by the Altar, his prayer should always be

are met by clear and unmistakable proof that those who made the inscriptions (in the Catacombs) considered it lawful to ask the prayers of their departed friends."

The evidence of this period, therefore, shows quite conclusively that before the end of the fourth century it was very generally believed in East and West alike that it was lawful and expedient to ask the saints departed for the help of their prayers; and since no accredited writer of the time, whose works have been preserved, has recorded anything by way of disapproval, we may infer that it was accepted by general Christian feeling. It should be added, perhaps, that the significance of such evidence cannot be explained away by such phrases as rhetorical exaggeration, impassioned apostrophe, religious emotion, imaginative feeling, and the like—while it is quite immaterial

directed to the Father." The teaching of S. Augustine in other places makes his meaning here to be quite obvious.

to the argument that the custom mainly centred round the graves of the Martyrs. The conviction was too universal to admit of any such explanation;—it was advocated by every class of mind, and in different parts of the world; it is too frequently referred to as the constant practice of Christian people to which no exception was to be taken; and it was evidently regarded as a form of devotion to which they might legitimately exhort their hearers as an encouragement and help in their religious life.

From the fourth century onwards, then, both in West and East, it became a universal practice—(round which, no doubt, in course of time there gathered some very distorted and mischievous ideas, to which reference must be made presently)—but before doing so it becomes imperative to face the question as to whether or not this silence on the subject in Ante-Nicene times is so fatal that we must regard it as a later corruption

The Evidence needed to establish the Catholicity of a Doctrine and of a Practice.

If we were dealing with a *doctrine*, such absence of early evidence in its favour would certainly constitute a formidable difficulty ;—but Invocation is not a doctrine so much as a *practice* which grew out of a doctrine which was both Scriptural and primitive, viz. a belief in the "Communion of Saints ;"—and the distinction is important. A Catholic *doctrine* must have formed an integral part of that original deposit which was committed to the Church at Pentecost. It need not have been defined until the occasion for such definition arose, but it must constitute something which was *implicitly* believed from the first. To establish the truth of a doctrine, therefore, we should be able to show that it formed a portion of that "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."¹ It may be quite possible

¹ Jude 3 (R.V.)

that all which was really involved and contained in that sacred treasure entrusted to the Apostles was only *gradually* apprehended in its fulness and understood, and that it was the office of the Church to realize, as time went on, fresh depths of meaning in what had been "once for all" revealed;—but unless we can trace some such evidence for the primitive character of a doctrine, its very novelty arouses our suspicions; and though it may be held as "a pious opinion," we rightly refuse to regard it as a part of the Faith. But this lack of primitive evidence is by no means equally fatal to a *practice*. "A doctrine (it has been truly said) can never be new; a practice may be of yesterday: a doctrine can never change; a practice may change from time to time, as expediency shall suggest; . . . though S. Augustine's well-known principle is most sound and just, that 'when the Universal Church has adopted any practice, it is the height of folly and madness to call in question

its lawfulness.’ ”¹ “But yet”—wrote the author of the “*Considerationes Modestæ*”—“we are not on this ground (viz. Ante-Nicene silence) to reject or condemn that addressing the Angels or saints in our prayers, of which we have been speaking. For it is well known, that many lawful and useful rites were brought into the Church by the Fathers and Councils of subsequent centuries, especially the fourth and fifth, of which we do not read anything in the writers of the preceding centuries. For the Church of the fourth century had the same right to institute lawful and useful ceremonies as the three which were before it. No one in his senses will deny this (*Nemo, ni fallor, sani cerebri hoc negaverit*²).” Hence if the doctrine on which a practice rests is free from suspicion, its novelty is no argument against its Catholicity or usefulness. And to apply this to the subject before us;—No one will question

¹ Percival, *Invocation of Saints*, pp. 4-6.

² Bishop Forbes, “*Considerationes Modestæ*,” pp. 237, 239.

the fact that Invocation was universally practised by the whole Church for at least a thousand years—(so that it can appeal to a fairly wide and venerable sanction)—while as it rests on an Article of the Creed which has been interpreted in this way by Catholic consent, it seems a little difficult to see how it is possible to evade its force. But is there any reason to think that the Anglican Church has attempted to do so?

*The Attitude of the Anglican Church
towards this Question at the Reformation.*

History abounds in illustrations of the fact that things good and innocent in themselves are painfully liable to abuse;—and this would seem to have been the case with Invocation. From asking the saints for their prayers, the passage was easy to making requests for other kinds of help (physical or spiritual) which *we* have no right to ask, and *they* have no power to grant. When the first Prayer-book

was drawn up in 1549, then, it was thought wiser by the responsible authorities to remove *all* kinds of invocation from the public offices of the Church. Whether they were right or wrong under existing circumstances in making this wholesale sweep, may be a matter where opinions will vary ; though it should be remembered that our Reformers could justify their action by an appeal to much earlier usage. For nearly six hundred years, it is asserted, “no invocations of saints were to be found in the authorized services of the Church ; while the removal of such petitions was a practical necessity of the times if the aim of the English Church to possess a form of public worship which could be used by those who, being agreed upon the essentials of the Faith, differed about much else was to be carried out.”¹ But however much they may

¹ *Church Quarterly*, vol. xlvii. p. 296.

It is not easy to determine how far Invocation is generally practised by every Catholic in the Roman Church (see *Consid. Mod.*, ii. pp. 189, 191), *e.g.* we have it on the authority of Bishop Andrewes that “it had been often

have wished to discourage it, we have no warrant whatever for asserting that the Reformers desired to make any reflection on the practice itself apart from the superstitions with which it had become incrustated. Luther on the Continent had said in his "Purgation of Certain Articles," "Along with the whole

told him by the illustrious Casaubon, that when he was discussing with the Cardinal Du Perron upon the invocation of saints, he (the Cardinal) had frankly avowed that he had never in all his life prayed to any of the saints, except that if he happened to follow in a procession he would then sing with the clergy, 'Pray for us,' but not on any other occasion" (Bishop Andrewes' *Answer to Chapter XX. of Cardinal Perron's Reply*, pp. 57-62). Cf. also, "I . . . find that throughout their whole Missal . . . and Breviary . . . there is not one Collect or prayer to any one saint whatever, but every one is expressly directed to God, and all ending with the same conclusion as we have, 'Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son.' . . . So that in the solemn worship of the Church, at which all are obliged to be present, it cannot be observed that they directly desire the prayer of any saints, except only in the Confiteor, which is very short, and in the Litanies, which are said only twice in the whole year; and even then the people are not obliged to be present at them."—*An Eirenicon of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxenham), pp. 153, 154.

Church of Christ, I hold and judge, that the saints are to be honoured and invoked by us ;” and in his treatise on “Preparation for Death,” he recommends, “When he (the sick man) is at the point of death, let him not cease to invoke the Blessed Virgin, his Guardian Angel, the Apostle whom he has chosen and the other saints . . . to intercede with the Lord for him ;”¹ and Cranmer distinctly says that such requests were *not* omitted, because he thought “the saints might in no wise be prayed to,” but *because of the prevailing superstitions*.

These statements, however, may seem to need a little further justification, since there are two places in our formularies where the Church of England may appear to have gone a step further in the way of condemnation.

(a) First, in Article XXII., which asserts among other things that “the Romish doctrine (*doctrina Romanensium*) concerning . . . invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented,

¹ *Consid. Mod.*, ii. p. 267.

and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God."

The Ten Articles of 1536, the "Institution of a Christian Man" in 1537, and the "Necessary Doctrine and Erudition of a Christian Man" in 1543, had recently dealt with the subject—justifying the practice, but repudiating abuses. When in 1552 the Forty-two Articles were drafted, they asserted that "the doctrine of the School authors (*Scholasticorum*), . . . concerning invocation of saints, is a fond thing vainly feigned, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God (*immo Verbo Dei perniciose contradicit*)."

In 1563, however, "*Scholasticorum*" was deliberately changed into "*Romanensium*," and the word *perniciose* was omitted; and these changes were doubtless intended to soften the condemnation, and to make it clear that it was not the opinions of the Schoolmen in general that were aimed at, but "certain vulgar dealers in all extreme notions current at the time," who had

been nicknamed “Romanenses.” Hardwick tells us that “the words Romanenses and Romanistæ were already used as far back as 1520 by Luther and Ulrich von Hutten, to designate the extreme Mediæval party.”¹

The Article therefore is silent on the subject as such, and Bishop Beveridge² (who is followed by Bishop Harold Browne³) must be quite wrong in supposing that reference is made to the studiously moderate statements of the Council of Trent, which were not actually promulgated till nearly a year afterwards. What the Article actually condemns are some erroneous views of the Romanenses, while they left the main subject untouched. Some of this party, indeed, had been guilty of some most pernicious teaching. They had assigned certain departments of life to the charge of particular saints, through whom alone could these benefits be secured. Others had held that prayers to the saints were only acceptable

¹ *History of the Articles*, p. 410.

² *On Articles* (Anglo-Cath. Library), vol. vii. p. 400.

³ P. 517.

when offered before certain shrines and images. Others would ask the saints for things which God alone could bestow—(though S. Thomas Aquinas has explained this to mean something far less objectionable). Others seem to have favoured the erroneous notion that the saints were more merciful than God. While others, once again, fell into the error of invoking the saints with a religious worship that was most idolatrous.

It is certain that the Council of Trent was anxious to sweep all this away when it decreed, "Let every superstition in connection with invoking the saints be done away (*omnis porro superstitio . . . tollatur*). Let all base questionings be cut off;"—and yet, as has been truly said, it must be admitted that "if a misunderstanding of the strong terms of the English Article has had some share in leading English people to think too little about the saints, the gentler action of the Council of Trent has certainly failed to keep out much which is inconsistent with the language which the Council used."¹

¹ *Church Quarterly*, vol. xlvii. p. 297.

(*b*) And then, secondly, there are the Homilies, which certainly appear to condemn the practice, and whose testimony it is not very easy to explain away. What *is* of far more importance, however, is the question as to the real authority of this strange assortment of incompatibilities; and on this point, fortunately, there seems to be a wonderful unanimity of opinion. Two or three examples must suffice:—

“By this approbation” (says Bishop Burnet) “. . . it is not meant that every passage of Scripture, or argument that is made use of in them, is always convincing, or that every expression is so severely worded that it may not need a little correction or explanation; all that we profess about them is only that they ‘contain a godly and wholesome doctrine.’ This rather relates to the main importance and design of them, than to any passage in them.”¹

“All writers on the subject have agreed”

¹ *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles.*

(says Bishop Harold Browne) "that the kind of assent, which we are here called on to give to them is general, not specific. We are not expected to express full concurrence with every statement, or every exposition of Holy Scripture contained in them, but merely, in the general, to approve of them, as a body of sound and orthodox discourses, and well adapted for the times for which they were composed."¹

"It is obvious from this" (says Dr. Gibson) "that the assent demanded to them is of a very general character, and cannot be held to bind us to the acceptance of every statement made in them. Nothing whatever is said about the *historical* statements contained in them, some of which are highly questionable, or even demonstrably false. And as to the doctrine, all that is asserted is that they '*contain* a godly and wholesome doctrine.' On one subject certainly their teaching appears to be

¹ *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, p. 777 (11th edition).

invested with a peculiar authority, viz. that of justification, owing to the express reference to them in Article XI. But on other matters a wide discretion is left to the individual, and he cannot fairly be called upon to maintain any particular view simply because it is taught in the Homilies." ¹

No one, in fact, takes the Homilies very seriously, except when it happens to be convenient to quote them in favour of some controversial position ; and as Dr. Neale has well pointed out, it follows that "if we are to be tied to the Homilies as to a Confession of Faith, we must believe in the Divine right of kings, in the inspiration of Apocrypha, in the benefit of a

¹ *The Thirty-nine Articles* (1st edition), pp. 726, 727. Cf. also Forbes on the *Articles*, p. 698 (2nd edition) ; Bp. Montague's "Appello Cæsarem," 1625, p. 260 ; Tract XC., § 11 ; and *The Articles of the Church of England*, by the Rev. B. J. Kidd, vol. ii. p. 256 : "It should be observed that *the nature of assent* demanded to the Homilies is but as to documents of *general* authority and *temporary* usefulness. They contain 'a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times.'"

fish diet, in the anti-Christianity of the Pope, and in the binding authority of the example of the Early Church. Does any one man (he asks) "believe in all these things together?"¹

The Official Teaching of the Roman and Eastern Church on Invocation.

The English Church, then, does not appear to have intended to *condemn* the practice of Invocation, when it was removed from the public services;—but before considering one or two of the most popular objections to the custom when relieved of abuses, it might be well to state very briefly the official teaching of the Roman and Eastern Church on this subject.

(a) In the Twenty-fifth Session of the Council of Trent it was decreed that, "The saints reigning together with Christ offer their prayers to God on behalf of men, and it is good and useful to invoke them as suppliants (*bonum atque utile*)

¹ *Lectures on Church Difficulties*, p. 200.

esse suppliciter eos invocare), and to take refuge in their prayers, support, and help, on account of the benefits to be obtained from God through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Who is our only Redeemer and Saviour; and those who deny that the saints enjoying eternal felicity in heaven are to be invoked, or who assert that they do not pray for men, or that the invocation of them to obtain their prayers for us even as individuals is idolatry (*vel eorum ut pro nobis etiam singulis orent invocationem esse idololatriam*), or that such invocation is repugnant to the Word of God, and derogatory to the honour of the only Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ; or who teach that it is foolish (*stultum*) to pray vocally or mentally to those reigning in heaven—hold an impious opinion (*impie sentire*)."

The Catechism of the same Council asserts that "God and the Saints are not to be prayed to in the same manner; for we pray to God that He Himself would give us good things,

and deliver us from evil things ; but we beg of the saints that they would be our advocates, and obtain from God what we stand in need of.”¹

(b) As to the Eastern Church :—The Catechism of M. Anastasios Diomedes Kyriakos² contains the following explanation on this subject, “Prayer is directed properly to God, but even though we also pray to the saints, we do this, not because we look upon them as a sort of Gods, able of themselves to help us—far from us be such blasphemy !—but because we believe that, as friends of God by reason of their sanctity and moral purity, they intercede with Him on our behalf, even as we who are still in the land of the living pray for one another, and may ask for one another’s supplications.”³

¹ Translated by Dr. Donovan (Dublin), p. 424.

² This Catechism has not only the sanction of the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Public Education, but also the approval of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece.

³ *Greek Manuals of Church Doctrine*, by Rev. H. T. F. Duckworth, p. 56.

The official teaching of the Russian Church is contained in an answer to the question, "What means of communion has the Church on earth with the Church in heaven?"

"The prayer of faith and love. The faithful who belong to the Church militant upon earth, in offering their prayers to God, call at the same time to their aid the saints who belong to the Church in heaven; and these, standing on the highest steps of approach to God, by their prayers and intercessions, purify, strengthen, and offer before God the prayers of the faithful living upon earth, and by the will of God work graciously and beneficently upon them, either by invisible virtue, or by distinct apparitions, and in divers other ways."¹

¹ *The Teaching of the Russian Church*, by the Rev. A. C. Headlam, p. 19.

The Eastern Church allows the invocation of the faithful departed without distinction. "Often" (says Mr. Headlam, p. 20, note 2) "when a child who has lost its mother is praying, he may be heard adding her name to those of the other saints whom he asks to pray for him, Mutual prayer of the dead for the living, of the living

Some Objections to the Practice considered.

Before concluding, it might be well to refer to one or two of the more common objections which have been alleged against the practice. Some of these may be dismissed at once as too trivial and puerile to need refutation, as for example that—

(a) The time so spent would be better employed in addressing our prayers to God ;—which, however, would be equally fatal, of course, to asking our friends on earth to remember us in the same way.

for the dead, and of both for the whole Church, is to the Russian the bond which links together the Church in one Communion of Saints.” In the West, the ordinary practice (which the Middle Ages inherited from much earlier times) restricted petitions to *Canonized* Saints ; though here at the present time there are two schools of thought—S. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa II^a*, lxxxiii. 4, 11) repudiating the invocation of souls in Purgatory, because they do not yet enjoy the vision of God ; but Bellarmine, while asserting the lawfulness of doing so, thinks it unnecessary under ordinary circumstances to ask for their prayers.

(b) Or that God is more ready to hear than any saint;—which is doubtless true, though it does not prove that the other may not be part of God's *plan*. If Abraham's prayers were needed for Abimelech,¹ Moses' for the success of Israel,² Job's for his friends,³ and "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,"⁴ it is not inconceivable (to say the least of it) that the prayers of the saints may occupy some legitimate office in the Divine counsels.⁵

¹ Gen. xx. 17, 18.

² Exod. xvii. 11, 12.

³ Job xlii. 7, 8.

⁴ S. James v. 16.

⁵ Cf. Oxenham's *Eiren. of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 231: "When God has made men the ministers of His power, then to go to such His minister is not to forsake God, or to seek any other power besides of God, but it is to comply with His ordinance, and consequently the direct way of seeking God, since doing His will is the most effectual way of going to Him." And Bp. J. C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on S. John*, vol. iii. p. 120: "There are some Christians whose prayers are more powerful and effectual than those of others. The nearer a man lives to Christ and the closer communion with Him, the more effectual will his prayers be. The truth of the doctrine is so self-evident and reasonable, that no one on reflection can deny it. He that lives nearest to Christ

(c) Or that prayer is an act of religious worship due to God alone;—but this is an objection which falls to the ground, when it is remembered that the only prayers which the Church sanctions, might be equally addressed to our fellow-creatures on earth.¹

But two much graver objections remain, which demand a more careful consideration.

1. It is alleged that Invocation constitutes an infringement of our Lord's mediation and intercession.

It would be admitted on all hands that there is but *One Mediator*² in the highest sense of the

will always be the man who feels most, and prays most earnestly, and fervently and heartily. Common sense shows that such prayers are most likely to get answers. . . . The holiest saints are the most earnest in prayer, and they consequently get the most."

¹ Cf. Oxenham's *Eiren. of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 71: "It is natural that those who have failed to grasp the sacrificial idea of worship should misapprehend the invocation of saints. Compared to that supreme adoration of the Most High, it has been justly said, all lesser acts of devotion are 'but friendly familiarities.'"

² 1 Tim. ii. 5.

word; but all theologians who advocate this practice are most careful to teach that the saints are *mediators only in a very subordinate sense*; e.g.—

S. Thomas Aquinas says, “We do not send forth our prayers to the saints, as if they were to be accomplished by them; for it belongs to God alone to give grace and glory; but as if they were to be obtained through them by their intercession.”¹

Or Bellarmine, “The saints are not our immediate intercessors with God, but whatever they ask for us from God, they ask it *through Christ*. . . . We invoke the saints for this purpose alone, that they may do what we do ourselves, because they can do it better and more effectively than we, and when they are

¹ “Secunda Secundæ,” lxxxiii. 4: “Primo quidem modo soli Deo orationem porrigimus, quia omnes orationes nostræ ordinari debent ad gratiam et gloriam consequendam, quæ solus Deus dat . . . sed secundo modo orationem porrigimus sanctis angelis et hominibus; non ut per eos Deus nostras petitiones cognoscat; sed ut eorum precibus et meritis orationes nostræ sortiantur effectum.”

associated with us we can pray better than when alone.”¹

Or Di Bruno, “Jesus is the only Mediator of Redemption, and also of intercession *by His own rights and merits*; whereas the mediation of the saints is not a mediation of Redemption, but *only a mediation of intercession, and this through the merits of Jesus Christ, their Divine Saviour and ours.*”²

Or in the Eastern Church, Father John, “We do not pray to any saint as we pray to God, we only ask his prayers for ourselves. Is there a shadow of idolatry in this? In the same manner as we ask God’s living ministers and suppliants to pray to Him for us, so likewise we ask the heavenly suppliants, who, from their love to God, have great boldness before Him. . . . There in heaven, this activity of theirs is only continued, has attained greater dimensions, and is especially powerful, because it is

¹ Quoted in Percival’s *Invocation of Saints*, pp. 54, 55.

² *Catholic Belief*, pp. 194, 195.

no longer hindered by the heavy and inert flesh." ¹

Bishop Forbes (of Brechin) seems to be justified, therefore, in saying that "even where the incommunicable attributes of God have, in expression at least, been invaded, the real underlying belief has been explained to be, that nothing is obtained for man, no grace, no aid, no gift for body, soul, or spirit, except through or from the One Mediator between God and man, our adorable Lord, Christ Jesus." ²

2. And the other objection is based on the doubt whether we have any warrant for supposing the saints can hear us.

It is generally assumed that the utility of Invocation depends on our answer to this question. Canon Mason (for example) says, "If we were sure that we could make known our desires to the departed, we should

¹ *Thoughts and Counsels of Father John*, p. 362.

² *Explanation of the Thirty-nine Articles*, p. 422.

undoubtedly be deprived of a great assistance if we were forbidden to do so ;”¹ and Bishop Harold Browne, “ If, indeed, we could be quite certain, that our departed friends could hear us, when we spoke to them, there might possibly be no more evil in asking them to continue their prayers for us, than there would be in asking those prayers from them whilst on earth—no evil, that is, except the danger that this custom might go further and so grow worse.”²

It has never been laid down authoritatively, however, in East or West that the saints *can* hear our prayers, know our needs, or that the utility of the practice depends upon their being able to do so. “ It is not of faith ” (says Veron) “ that the saints in heaven hear the prayers of the living,” while “ according to the belief of the Eastern Church, the invocation of saints is neither repugnant to the Scriptures, nor even

¹ *Purgatory, etc.*, p. 145.

² *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, pp. 535, 536.

Prayer-book does not claim to be our Rule of Faith—it represents rather the ancient offices of Western Christendom curtailed and expurgated in such a way as not to offend “the peculiar theological views of restless and innovating spirits in the Church, and of still more restless spirits beyond its pale”—but it never professes to be a complete embodiment of all that may be believed and practised within her fold without incurring suspicion of disloyalty to the principles she means to enshrine.

It has been often pointed out how “a religious impulse is weakened if it does not find expression;” and certainly all experience tends to convince us how no article of belief is ever likely to last very long as a present reality, except when it has been enshrined and kept alive in some corresponding practice through which it can find its appropriate outward manifestation.¹

¹ Bp. Butler has shown how “from our very faculty of habits, passive impressions, by being repeated, grow weaker,” and how “thoughts, by often passing through the mind, are felt less sensibly,” whereas “habits of the

upheaval, exaggeration, compromise to the level of some second Pentecost, or to regard it as the inauguration of a new golden age which had at length finally settled every point of Catholic faith and practice? If one thing more unmistakably than another is stamped on this momentous crisis in our ecclesiastical history, it is its conscious lack of finality which manifested itself in a reiterated appeal to Catholic tradition and the expression of a hope that the questions at issue might some day be settled by the infallible verdict of a truly Œcumenical authority. When we look at parallel movements on the Continent, there is much cause for thankfulness that everything really *essential* has been preserved; but this constitutes no reason for asserting that the exclusion of any particular form of religious devotion from the public offices of the Church is to be interpreted as a tacit expression of her disapproval, especially on subjects where she appears to have deliberately refrained from pronouncing her opinion. The

itself in matters purely indifferent to racial idiosyncrasies ;—but is it not equally bound “to qualify, to compensate, to correct the limitations under which each race suffers? It can never identify itself with any partial characteristics, not even if they happen to be Anglo-Saxon.” The Church of England, after all, is only part of a greater whole ; it is tied to the whole past of the Church ; and it only lives at all because it is so tied. The Reformation swept away (and rightly so) a great deal of abuse and superstition which had gathered round many venerable customs in the course of ages ;—but what right have we to exalt this period of transition, with religious divisions, and the State endeavoured to avoid these dangers by crushing differences out. But that does not mean that it was thought to be the natural function of the State to decide what was the practice and teaching of the Church ; it means that having found out as nearly as it could what the teaching and practice of the Church of England was, the State made the attempt to enforce it as a political measure for political reasons in the whole country. . . . All that Parliament did was to make the Church’s order binding as statute-law, upon men as citizens, not as Churchmen.”—*Modern Anglicanism*, by Gordon Milburn, pp. 151, 152.

violation of some antiquated Act of Uniformity.¹

Christianity is bound, of course, to commend

protest against the Reformation Settlement. If we recognize that, human nature being what it is, there are certain dangers and diseases to which a one-sided Catholicism is very liable, we shall naturally expect that there will be others to which a one-sided Protestantism is inclined. . . . What could be more inconsistent than to raise a revolt in Christendom on behalf of the principle of reformation, and then to assume for ourselves the papal attribute of incorrigible infallibility? . . . Surely the right of private judgment involves the right to decide either way. Protestant associations seem to take it to mean the right to differ from the traditional thought or customs of the Church, but from themselves—never!"

—*Modern Anglicanism*, by Gordon Milburn, pp. 49, 50.

¹ "The Erastian position in England rests upon a misunderstanding of the import of the Acts of Uniformity. They are often thought to represent the authority of the State to regulate the doctrine and ritual of the Church. This is a mistake. By the Acts of Uniformity the state gave to the ritual and liturgy of the Church the force of statute-law. In the reign of Elizabeth there were numbers of non-conformist clergy, who, while retaining their position as clergy of the English Church, wanted to abolish not only the ritual of the Church and the Prayer-book, but also Episcopal government. The Act of Uniformity was directed against these non-conformists; the Prayer-book was enforced by law as was also a certain minimum of ritual. The State believed Dissent, whether Puritan or Roman, to be a political danger; plots, revolutions, and wars were in those days intimately associated

Catholic and useful. Possibly our insular position and imperial pre-eminence often constitute a real religious danger in matters like these. We English people find it so hard to widen our spiritual sympathies far enough to include anything beyond that severe type of native devotion which seems so congenial to the Teutonic blood and the Anglican temperament; and consequently the Catholic Church in this land is often earnestly implored to confine her worship and theology to those particular points of faith and devotion on which the great Anglo-Saxon instinct has been pleased to confer its patronage and approval. As soon as liberty is claimed for the enjoyment of those larger notes of Catholic Christianity which carry us a little beyond the frontiers of British preference, it is greeted as a disloyal effort to overthrow some Reformation Settlement,¹ or as the

¹ "The right of reformation is a principle which cuts both ways. The more freely we concede the right of the individual acting on his own private judgment to protest, and when it was necessary, to rebel against the Mediæval Church, the more readily we must admit his right to

to establish the legitimacy of a practice which no part of the Church regards as essential, and which even Rome only considers as “good and useful (*bonum atque utile*)”?

Those who are satisfied with occupying a position of permanent isolation in Christendom, would probably not hesitate to give a negative answer; whereas if we value our claim to be considered an integral part of the Church Catholic, we shall be conscious that there are some grave objections against repudiating a devotion which has such venerable sanction behind it, which has been appreciated by the saints, and which is practised in all other parts of the Church.

There is nothing, probably, which has done so much to widen the breach between those ancient Churches and ourselves, as our attitude towards the saints. At the Reformation we professed to cut away all the superstition that had gathered round an ancient custom; whereas our practice must have looked very suspiciously like a rejection of much that was avowedly

We, on its shore,
Share in the bosom of our rest—
God's knowledge, and are blest ! ” ¹

Perhaps this mysterious subject may best be summed up in the words of Bossuet: “The Church is content to teach, with all antiquity, that these prayers are profitable to those who make them, whether the saints learn of them through the ministry of angels, . . . or whether God Himself makes to them a particular revelation of our desires, or that they find them out in the Beatific Vision of His infinite Essence in which all things are contained. Thus it is evident that the Church has given no decision upon what means God employs for this end.” ²

What is our Right Relation to the Practice?

What ought to be our own attitude towards this matter? Is it worth while (it might be urged)

¹ *Lyra Apost.*, liii.

² Exposition de la Doctrine de l'Eglise Cath. (quoted in Percival, p. 50).

elaborated by the Schoolmen, who taught that the Face of God is the mirror of the Universe (*speculum Trinitatis*), and that “each of the blessed sees in the Divine essence so much as is required to make his beatitude perfect,”¹ which might well include among other things the prayers and desires of those on earth whom they would aid in attaining the same salvation.

“A sea before
The Throne is spread ; its pure still glass
Pictures all earth-scenes as they pass.

¹ S. Thomas, *Summa*. Secunda Secundæ, lxxxiii. 4 : “In Verbo manifestatur illud quod decet eos cognoscere de eis quæ circa nos aguntur.”

Tertia pars Supplem., lxxii. 1 : “Divina essentia est sufficiens medium cognoscendi omnia. . . . Non tamen sequitur quod quicumque essentiam Dei vident, omnia cognoscant, sed solùm qui essentiam Dei comprehendunt. . . . Unde cùm animæ sanctorum divinam essentiam non comprehendant, non est consequens ut omnia cognoscant quæ per essentiam divinam cognosci possunt. . . . Sed unusquisque beatus tantùm de aliis rebus necessarium est ut in essentia divina videat, quantum perfectio suæ beatitudinis requirit.”

Respons. ad quart : “Quamvis videntes Verbum non sit necessarium in Verbo omnia videre, vident tamen ea quæ ad perfectionem suæ beatitudinis pertinent.”

as to the "*how*." There was an instinctive conviction, however, that they *could* hear, and the practice was founded on this conviction. It grew and spread unhindered, nay, encouraged by the greatest living saints and doctors, who in course of time made attempts to explain it. S. Augustine¹ says that "we must admit that although the dead do not know at the moment what is going on upon earth, they may get to know of it later, from those who pass to them by death; they do not learn everything, but only what they are permitted to know, because it is good for them to know it. Angels, also, who are certainly present in earthly concerns, may perhaps carry to the dead such intelligence as they may require. Again, things past, present, or future may be made known to the dead where occasion demands it, by direct revelation of the Holy Ghost, as in the case of the prophets while upon earth." This last suggestion of S. Augustine was taken up and

¹ "De Curâ Ger. pro Mortuis," 16-20 (Mason, pp. 150, 151).

fond and useless, even though the saints do not learn all our addresses.”¹

But that they *can* do so in some mysterious way has been the opinion of most theologians. In early times no explanation, apparently, was sought of the *manner*; and since we know so little of the faculties of spirits, the laws of their exercise and their limitations, the nature of their knowledge and their presence, perhaps it is best that we should confess our ignorance

¹ See Percival, *Invocation of Saints*, pp. 14, 15, 110-113; “*Considerationes Modestæ*,” vol. ii. pp. 169-185. “It is not imagined by any Roman Catholic that either the Blessed Virgin or any other deceased servant of God to whom such petitions are addressed hears them directly. The universal belief among Roman Catholics, as far as Lord Bute is aware, is that such persons are conscious of nothing except God and such things as He may please to reveal to them, and it is a matter of question whether they are informed by Him that their prayers are being asked, and, thereupon, support the wishes of the petitioners as far as they may be in accordance with the will of God, or whether the knowledge of such progress ends with God, Who alone is omniscient and ubiquitous, and Who grants them if He pleases for the sake of His saints.”—Extract from letter of Lord Bute, February, 1880.

And this remark, which is true in so many other departments of life, would appear to be especially applicable in the present connection.

"No article of the Creed (it has been truly said) is unimportant in our spiritual life, but belief in the Communion of Saints for any practical purpose has not survived the suppression in our public services of those devotions, ascriptions, and invocations which spring from any real belief in it, as the flower does from the root. The result is that our spiritual ancestry is forgotten, the saints ignored, and the Blessed Mother of God deprived of that place in our hearts, and of that reverence and honour which was to be hers throughout all generations."¹

As soon as people begin to study and think, we shall not find it easy to crush out a natural

mind are produced by the exertion of inward practical principles, *i.e.* by carrying them into act, or acting upon them."—*Analogy*, pt. i. cap. 5.

¹ Lord Halifax, *Proposals for Mutual Explanation*, p. 13.

instinct like this, with so much history to support it, by crude prohibition ; it will decline to be swept away by vulgar prejudice, by articles in newspapers, or by experiments in the direction of undenominational comprehensiveness ; while indiscriminate denunciations of the practice (especially when unsupported by any evidence of its illegality) fail to bring home to the mind any sense of conviction, even if such condemnation happen to emanate from episcopal thrones.

“Turn nature, neck-and-shoulders, out of door,
She'll find her way to where she was before ;
And imperceptibly in time subdue
Wealth's sickly fancies, and her tastes untrue.”¹

Outraged nature is wont to make her violent reprisals ; and some of these are already becoming plainly manifest before our eyes.

¹ Works of Horace translated into English Verse by Sir Theodore Martin, K.C.B., vol. ii. p. 298.

“Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret,
Et mala perrumpet furtim fastidia victrix.”

Epistles, Lib. I. x. 24, 25.

Are we sure that this modern craze of spiritualism which appeals so powerfully to a certain class of minds—(with its spirit rappings, inspired mediums, and illegitimate meddlings with another world)—forms an altogether desirable substitute for that *cultus sanctorum* which, with all the abuses and exaggerations that clustered round it, has so totally disappeared? Abuses, no doubt, are always liable to recur ;—but abuses are not best dealt with by a suppression of that underlying truth which they misrepresent. If people were taught to understand our true relation to the saints in the Body of Christ, we should be much less likely to witness the appearance of phenomena which are deplorable, or wild vagaries of the imagination which can only be satisfactorily corrected by a better knowledge of the facts which they caricature.

The way in which this subject should be regarded cannot be summed up better than in those wise and guarded words of Bishop Forbes : “ Let God alone be religiously adored : let Him

alone be prayed to, through Christ, Who is the only and sole Mediator, truly and properly speaking, between God and men. Let not the very ancient custom received in the universal Church, as well Greek as Latin, of addressing the Angels and saints after the manner we have mentioned, be condemned or rejected as impious, nor even as vain and foolish, by the more rigid Protestants. Let the foul abuses and superstitions which have crept in, be taken away. And so peace may thereafter easily be established and sanctioned between the dissentient parties, as regards this controversy. Which may the God of peace and of all pious concord vouchsafe to grant for the sake of His only begotten Son." ¹

¹ "Considerationes Modestæ," vol. ii. p. 313.

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM.

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